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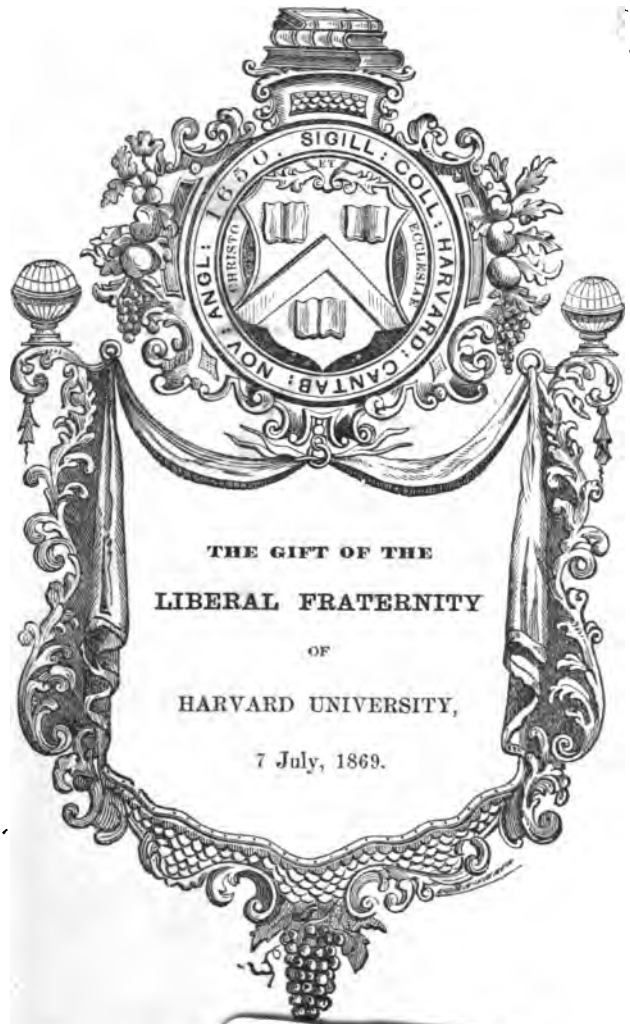

THE GIFT OF THE

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THE

MISTAKE OF CHRISTENDOM;

OR,

JESUS AND HIS GOSPEL

BEFORE

PAUL AND CHRISTIANITY.

BY

GEORGE STEARNS.

"The Truth shall make you Free."

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY BELA MARSH,
14 BROMFIELD STREET.
1857.

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To

ALL WHO SEEK TRUTH, PREFER RIGHT, AND WORSHIP WORTH,

THE AUTHOR

DEDICATES THESE INSIGNIA

OF

Humanity's Best Model.

PREFACE.

READER, be not in haste to judge of what this book evolves, from the seeming triteness of its essential theme. I grant that something called *the Gospel* has had many preachers. In the little city where I reside are twenty-five or more clergymen, whose proper business it is to study and teach the precious lore of Jesus. Every Sunday we have some fifty sermons in Lowell; in our whole nation perhaps fifty thousand; and in all Christendom not less than five hundred thousand. According to a rough calculation, as many as five hundred million discourses have been publicly pronounced, on this one great subject, since the days of the nominal founder of the Church. Now, when such statistics are duly considered, as well as the specious fact that all these pulpit demonstrations have been and are performed by a class of men who have nothing else to do, being maintained at the public charge, and otherwise rewarded for their diligence by certain sacred dignities and no uncertain secular

perquisites of their calling; that they are generally men of reputed intelligence and honesty, to whom is conceded a sort of divine commission and qualification for their work; that to men of such character and position there should be little inducement to hide their light under a bushel, but rather the most earnest and incessant promptings to utter the truth; that every ecclesiastical teacher takes up the significant and subduing confession of Paul, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel!" and "if any man preach any other gospel" but that of Jesus, "let him be accursed:" considering, I say, all these circumstantial facts, together with the means to ample information on the part of every doctor and student of Christian theology, who will be bold enough — who will dare such a seeming of impudence, as to say that the Church does not know Jesus, and that his Gospel has never been fairly preached?

THE AUTHOR.

Lowell: May, 1857.

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THE

MISTAKE OF CHRISTENDOM.

PART FIRST.

WHAT THE CHURCH HAS HAD TO DO WITH JESUS.

"Jesus answered them, and said, Verily, verily I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." — JOHN VI. 26.

IN this disquisition on the doings of the Church, I would not implicate the steepled edifices of New England, nor of any other land, whose tapering spires are apt to lead up the thoughtful to realms of a higher life. There is no lie in those ecclesiastical hands, pointing as they do with exquisite conspicuity to the faithful monitions of Man's most eminent, most slighted teacher: "Labor not for the meat which perisheth;" "Lay up for yourselves treas-

ures in Heaven;" for know, "Ye must be born again." No falsehood there: the sectarian *fanes* preach all the same home-truths.

When the belfries, chanting requiems
Over gaping sepulchres,
Knell afar the mourner's sadness,
This from far reverberates,
As it were a living spirit
Bringing back the mourner's solace,
Saying that the loved and loving
In these echoes answer us.

I spare Religion's altars. Let no cur
Of satire move his tongue against the holds
Of Worship. Tools of Culture these, and wrenched
From priestly hands, they may be wisely used.
Reformer, dost thou aim thy sturdy blows
At any work of Time, then is thy name
De-former. Nay, destroyer, thou shalt mar
Thy weapon, but never these rocks of truth.

God save the goodly temples of our land!
I love them less for what they were than are,
And verily for what they are to be —
Schools of Wisdom and nurseries of Love,
Where Conscience yet shall break the bread of Truth,

And Reason, too, the rod of Reverence.
Good spirits! guide my thought, restrain my pen,
Nor let me write a word disparaging
The Hope of Christendom. The Church hath need
Never to change her aim, only to lose
Her errors. Mind, and read *Ecclesia*
In its literal, most essential sense.

I battle not with synagogues and sects.
Not one of them would I annihilate,
Were I almighty. There 's a good in each
That is the need of all, and the same ill;
For what divides is what they all should hate.
They seem to me like orchards I have seen,
O'errun with canker-worms. 'T is not the trees,
Only the parasites should be destroyed.
I own their fruits are bitter: so in Spring
Are green apples. Wait till the fruits are ripe.
But thrifty trees may be improved by trimming;
So may the schools of Faith; and here 's the task
We are coming to.

By the Church I mean
All ritual worshipers from first to last
Bearing the name of Christian, who adore
Jesus as the Christ — God's atoning Lamb
And Man's sole Savior, and who seek reprieve

From damnation through his vicarious death.
Here is the heart of every Christian's hope.
Some other doctrines gather on this core,
But they are not essential to the saint —
As oft embody in a sinner's life.
Faith in the Cross is all the excellence
The wicked need, to make them orthodox.
And in a crowd of such idolaters,
Though some are virtuous, 't is all of chance
That any are. Of most it may be said,
They honor less the precepts of their Lord,
Than his bestowing grace. They cherish not
His life of love, but only seek its fruits.
They prize a heaven above their own desert,
And pray for bliss they have no will to earn.
Nay, worse; like the hungry, whom Jesus fed,
The Church has magnified his precious name
Much for its worldly sway, much for its golden gains.

Here for *Ecclesia* understand *Priestcraft*,
Whose portraiture ensues: first, in the act
Of making court, with angel-faced pretence,
To the World's own Jesus; then touched with rage
For his rejected suit, snatching the scroll
Of human Hope — the Gospel-word of Life,
And in the mire of lust and bigotry
Stamping it out of sight; but last and best,

In his defeat, confounded that his work
Turns to fulfil this word of prophecy:

"Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again;
The eternal years of God are hers;
But error, wounded, writhes in pain,
And dies amid her worshipers."

CHAPTER I.

REPUTATION OF THE CHURCH.

"Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you."—LUKE VI. 26.

THERE is a common notion that proverbs are oracles of wisdom; and many gravely repeat, that "what everybody says must be true." Reputation generally supersedes character, so far as individuals belong to society; and so far as institutions affect persons, public opinion represents law. How a man *grows* into popularity! How much greater our statesmen *in* office than *out!* In 1844, everybody was asking, "Who is James K. Polk?" The next year all wished to hide their former ignorance. Now the marvel is, how political grandeur perishes! The frail thing is coveted, nevertheless. All men would have others think and speak well of them. Who will not listen, when one's name is uttered, to know if it savor re-

spect? All love praise and hate reproach, and here is the sceptre of Fashion. Hence mutual deceit and flattery. Nobody knows what anybody likes, nor how much each pretends. What the many profess — that is conventional faith and the cowl of Priestcraft. The strength of *this* Samson is more outward even than his hair: it is all in his Reputation.

The fulcrum of ecclesiastical sway, in all its sectarian forms, is the notion that Jesus belongs to the Church. Root out this sentiment from the mind of Christendom, and who would worship for a worldly weal, or fee a priest to find the grace of God? Not one. This thought alone, be it true or false, promotes the aristocracy of prelates, the servility of laymen, the austerities of saints, and the subjection of people everywhere to useless forms of worship. Whether this public opinion is to be traced to warrantable facts, or otherwise is an unsupportable assumption, is a point to be considered by and by. At present I have only to do with the old and vulgar belief, of which there are three specifications; and so this chapter assumes a corresponding sectional form.

SECTION I.

Jesus the supposed Founder of the Church.

That Jesus founded the Christian Church, is so generally and surely believed all over Christendom, that preachers rarely find an occasion to make a formal assertion of the tenet. Not that conviction is grounded in information at all: the assumption is never made a thesis, but all imbibe it as an implication of what is religiously taught.

Go anywhere among Christians, and begin to inquire what evidence there is that Jesus instituted, or by his teachings authorized, any ecclesiastical establishment like the sects of Christendom, and you will be interrupted at once with grave counsels against scepticism and free-thinking; or, if you be docile enough to make such application to your spiritual attorney, instead of getting what you seek, you will be lucky if you elude a provocation to asperse your standing as a believer. Nay, you will be likely to be called "infidel" outright; and the common dread of this sacerdotal missile is enough to conserve any falsehood which is popular.

SECTION II.

All the various Ordinances of the Church supposed to have been specially enjoined by Jesus.

This tenet is held by each sect in reference to its own creed and discipline, though in a strictly exclusive sense. Of course no sectary believes in opposing ordinances, but thinks those of his own brotherhood only are valid. He writes "Orthodox" on his adopted formulary, and "Heterodox" on all the rest. All agree, however, in this: Each presumes that authentic Christianity is the genuine Gospel of Jesus; and each believes that no form of worship is acceptable to God, and therefore efficient for "salvation," except that which originated with the nominal Savior of the World.

Even outside of the Church it is generally conceded that the sacraments and other ordinances therein performed, are such as Jesus enjoined. All who have any faith in ecclesiastical observances, must have a prior faith in him, and regard them as the proper instrumentalities of his "saving grace." And

among the few who have no confidence in his alleged authority as Mediator of God and Man, some partially yield the claim of his professed followers, supposing that their errors were really derived from him.

SECTION III.

A supposed Mystical Union between the Church and Jesus, through which all her official acts are still guided and sanctioned by him.

Without this tenet the Christian Faith is dead, and all worship in the Church a mockery. It is generally believed that Jesus is a Divine Personage, and that his mission as the Savior of Man dates from the foundation of our world. His miracles in Galilee and his immolation on Calvary are not supposed to mark the beginning and end of his work for human redemption, but only the season of its manifestation. He is presumed to have had a glory with the Father long before he was laid in the manger of his manhood. Nor does anybody suppose that his life

was cut off at the Crucifixion. "His soul was not left in Hell," according to the faith of St. Peter, but ascended to Paradise, whence he often returned to bless the little flock of his Galilean disciples. And do not all believers opine, very reasonably, that his sympathy with such as love and practise his precepts has increased with their multiplication to this day, and that his interest in the spread of his own Gospel is a warrant of his continued alliance, as the invisible Head of the Church? Does not every convert submit to the rite of baptism as the seal of pardoning grace through the actual mediation of Jesus, the High Priest of Churchdom, now entered once for all into the Spiritual Holy of Holies? Do not the Eucharistic elements signify to all believers that the ever-living Jesus is still spiritually present, to honor the memorials of the Last Supper, and to crown with mystic blessings all who sorrow for sin as the cause of his agony on the Cross? Do not all Christians believe that Jesus verily draws nigh to them in their acts of worship, communing with them as they with him, in prayer and fasting and fervent thanksgiving? And of all not of the Church,

who, for the last eighteen centuries, have looked on her devotions and marked their popular growth, how few have intimated a doubt — how many have seemed to admit, that all these things of faith are real!

Such is the Reputation of the Church. The World will yet see how great a *mistake* there is in it. Public Opinion is a fallible wight, hard to chasten, and never inclined to learn. However aberrant, he is slowly induced to turn. He is not to be hurried by one who would mend his ways; and many to-day, like the cynics of former days, will let him alone for a very stubborn carle. But I shall not.

CHAPTER II.

PROFESSION OF THE CHURCH.

"Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"
LUKE VI. 46.

MEN are generally taken for what they profess to be, and perhaps this concession is no more than the majority deserve; but everybody must be aware of many unworthy exceptions. Individual pretenders are plentiful, and it is no wonder that they sometimes consociate in a body. What a catalogue of quacks in science, arts and morals, I might write out, if the reader's own observation had not already more than supplied the demand for such a recital! There are pseudo-professors of learning, talent, genius, magic even, and why not of religious merit? Hypocrisy is not peculiar to the Church, but, since all soldiers of the Cross are chosen out of the World, it would be strange indeed if none chanced to be traitorous. Not

to prejudge the case, however, let us see what the representatives of Christianity have claimed for themselves.

The Profession of the Church has always been in keeping with her Reputation. She has never claimed to be less than the estimation of men. In fact, she has done all in her power to confirm public opinion in favor of her intimacy and alliance with Jesus. I rest this general statement on the three following minor theses.

SECTION I.

The Church formally adores Jesus as her Divine Lord, and openly avows her faith in him as the Savior of the World.

She does this in all her sanctuaries, where she sets up the worshipful form of Jesus, teaching her votaries to kneel before the sacred image and press the crucifix to their penitential hearts. The sun-lit Cross glitters on the pinnacle of every cathedral, and the burden of every pulpit tongue in Christendom,

is "*Ecce Homo!*" — "Behold the Lamb of God!"

Thus a pastor in his study
Magnifies his parish calling:—

"Jesus, the name high over all,
In hell, or earth, or sky,
Angels and men before it fall,
And devils fear and fly.

"Jesus, the name to sinners dear,
The name to sinners given!
It scatters all their guilty fear;
It turns their hell to heaven.

"His only righteousness I show,
His saving grace proclaim:
'T is all my business here below
To cry, "Behold the Lamb!"

But sometimes believers tremble,
Lest the wolves out-watch the shepherd;
And they pray their keeper's keeping:—

"Let Zion's watchmen all awake
And take the alarm they give;
Now let them from the mouth of God
Their awful charge receive.

"'T is not a cause of small import
The pastor's care demands ;
But what might fill an angel's heart,
And filled the Savior's hands.

"May they that Jesus whom they preach
Their own Redeemer see ;
And watch thou daily o'er their souls,
That they may watch for thee."

Hear a child of grace atoning
Turn believing into loving,
And all love to holy living: —

"Jesus, my all, to Heaven is gone,
He whom I fix my hopes upon ;
His track I see, and I 'll pursue
The narrow way till him I view.
This is the way I long have sought,
And mourned because I found it not ;
Till late I heard my Savior say,
'Come hither, soul, I am the way.'
Now let me tell to sinners round
What a dear Savior I have found."

"Vain, delusive world, adieu !
With all of creature good ;
Only Jesus I pursue,
Who bought me with his blood !
All thy pleasures I forego ;
I trample on thy wealth and pride :

Only Jesus will I know,
And Jesus crucified.

"Other knowledge I disdain,
'T is all but vanity:
Christ, the Lamb of God, was slain,
He tasted death for me!
Fain would I to sinners show
The blood by faith alone applied!
Only Jesus will I know,
And Jesus crucified!"

"Children of the heavenly King,
As we journey let us sing;
Sing our Savior's worthy praise,
Glorious in his works and ways.
Fear not, brethren, joyful stand
On the borders of our land;
Jesus Christ, our Father's Son,
Bids us undismayed go on.
Lord! obediently we go,
Gladly leaving all below;
Only thou our leader be,
And we still will follow thee!"

Zion, too, with happy seeming,
Sings of longing and of dreaming,
Sings of being less than deeming: —

"Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress:

'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.
The holy, meek, unspotted Lamb,
Who from the Father's bosom came,
Who died for me, e'en me to atone,
Now for my Lord and God I own.
Lord, I believe were sinners more
Than sands upon the ocean shore,
Thou hast for *all* a ransom paid,
For ALL a full atonement made."

So all sects, in one grand chorus,
Laud the living name of Jesus,
As the very charm of worship: —

"All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall!
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown him Lord of all!

"Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,
Ye ransomed from the fall,
Hail him who saves you by his grace,
And crown him Lord of all!

"Let every kindred, every tribe,
Of this wide earthly ball,
To him all majesty ascribe,
And crown him Lord of all!

"O that with yonder holy throng
We at his feet may fall;
There join the everlasting song,
And crown him Lord of all!"

SECTION II.

The Church has written the name of Jesus on all her institutions, and claims his authority for all her doings.

She has turned the Sabbath of Moses into "the Lord's Day." Her Passover is "the Lord's Supper." Confounding the Christ with Jesus, she calls herself *Christian*, and her own ceremony of sprinkling *christening*. All her converts pray to Jesus; and if they ask anything of the Father, it is only through the merits of the Son. His human name, the name by which his mother called him when a boy, is more familiar and precious with the saints than any other name in heaven. It is heard in all the laic doxologies, and is the only one of reverence that is never omitted in a clerical benediction.

In fact, the Church has no ordinance of devotion without a nominal reference to "the Divine Shepherd and Bishop of Souls." Baptism is said to be the Savior's signet of redemption. Men and women go to the river-side and submit their bodies for ritual immersion, not because they love a cold bath in this ostentatious way, but rather for sake of that saving grace of which, the Church tells them, this rite is the essential means. Though a priest only is seen to preside at the font, believers are admonished to discern in his act the spiritual presence of Jesus; and pious parents are encouraged to bear their infants thither, that the Lord may take them in his arms and bless them, even as of yore, saying of the christened babes, "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

When the Church spreads her eucharistic feast
Of home-made bread and our Madeira wine,
It is to eat by faith the Paschal Lamb.
On the soft loaf the pastor lays his palms,
And invocates the hypostatic God: —

"Jesus, at whose supreme command
We now approach to God,

Before us in thy vesture stand,
Thy vesture dipped in blood:
Obedient to thy gracious word,
We break the hallowed bread;
Commemorate thee, our dying Lord,
And trust on thee to feed.

"The living bread sent down from Heaven,
In us vouchsafe to be;
Thy flesh for all the world is given,
And all may live by thee;
Now, Lord, on us thy flesh bestow,
And let us drink thy blood;
Till all our souls are filled below
With all the life of God."

Then the communicants responsive sing: —

"Jesus, we thus obey
Thy last and kindest word;
Here, in thine own appointed way,
We come to meet our Lord.
The way thou hast enjoined,
Thou wilt therein appear;
We come with confidence to find
Thy special presence here.
Whate'er the Almighty can
To pardoned sinners give,
The fulness of our God-made man,
We here with Christ receive."

Whereat the pastor gratulates his sheep: —

"The King of Heaven his table spreads,
And blessings crown the board;
Not Paradise, with all its joys,
Could such delight afford.
That doleful night before his death,
The Lamb for sinners slain
Did, almost with his dying breath,
This solemn feast ordain.
See, Jesus stands with open arms;
He calls, he bids you come:
Ye happy souls, his grace adore;
Approach, there yet is room.
All things are ready, come away,
Nor weak excuses frame;
Crowd to your places at the feast,
And bless the Founder's name."

Now the hallowed bread, in deft morsels cut,
Is doled to every waiting child of faith,
The priest assevering with no faltering voice:
"This is the body of the Crucified —
Him who hath said, 'Except ye eat my flesh
And drink my blood, ye have no life in you.'"
Anon the wine is poured, the chalice kissed,
To typify the fount of Calvary,
And there is awful stillness in the fane;
For all the saints are musing on the Cross,
The deathless love and earthquake agony
Of their expiring God.

Hear what the first Christian doctor of divinity claimed for himself and his colleagues: —

"Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ; for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. And I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man; for I neither received it of man, nor was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

And so the Church has said of all her lore.
How Paul's presumption flatters modern priests!
And aged men have almost ceased to stare,
When beardless preachers say without a blush:
"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ,
As though God did beseech you, sirs, by us:
We pray you, in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God."

When the Church makes of men her ministers,
She bids them say they think most heartfully
Jesus has called them to the godly work;
Demands an honest faith, an active zeal,
A will of love to know and do and teach
"His doctrine, sacraments and discipline."
To greaten trust, she aptly quotes from Paul: —

"Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

And whom he consecrates the bishop first exhorts:

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye have in remembrance, into how high a dignity, and to how weighty an office and charge ye are called: that is to say, *to be messengers, watchmen, and stewards of the Lord;* to teach, and to premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord's family; to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children who are in the midst of this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ forever. Have always therefore printed in your remembrance how great a treasure is committed to your charge. For they are the sheep of Christ, which he bought with his death, and for whom he shed his blood. The

church and congregation whom you must serve is his spouse and his body."

Now bend their knees, and on their willing heads
The prelate lays his hands, charged from above
With all the priestly powers — the very gifts
That Jesus gave first to his chosen twelve.
The rite is done; the bishop bids them go
The way of clergymen, and after them
The benedictive voices of the Church:

Ye Christian heralds, go proclaim
Salvation in Immanuel's name:
To distant lands the tidings bear,
And plant the Rose of Sharon there."

SECTION III.

The Church professes to know and teach the whole Gospel of Jesus, and to be the exclusive medium of his saving grace.

Where is the Christian sect that *proposes* to teach only a part of the Gospel? In manner, if not in word, every preacher seems to say that he is ready to "declare the whole counsel of God." It is a no-

torious fact, that, in all ages, ecclesiastics have made it their business to *instruct*, always manifesting great unwillingness to *learn* anything of others, and boldly proclaiming that all who receive not their doctrine must perish for its lack. Assuming that the sacred scriptures constitute the only valid form of Revelation, and so the sole medium of religious intelligence, they argue that the New Testament, being a work of Divine Inspiration in which the whole Trinity was concerned, is therefore a perfect summary of all that Jesus himself would teach. So every clergyman carries the Gospel in his pocket, and missionaries proffer it to the heathen between a thumb and finger.

Look at the attitude of the Church to-day. Is it at all like that of a Truth-seeker? Is it for more light that she prays, or more faith in what she has? Is she making the best use of her faculties to be undeceived and to grow in knowledge; or does she pretend to have already attained all the religious truth that is worth wishing for, and this unmixed with error? Does she honor science and philosophy in their application to her creed; or does she denounce all rational tests of her revelations as dangerous and

wicked? Has she a ready ear for such as would gladly correct her cherished falsehoods, and show her just how far and verily she has mistaken the words of other men for thoughts of Jesus; or does she curl her lips in scorn of Reason's voice, renewing still her mythologic tale of brimstone fires for all that doubt whatever she believes?

Consider her method of instruction. See how she evades the common art of teaching, and the usages of schools for secular information. She does not address the understandings of men, but utters rigid dogmas, beginning with an exhortation to faith, and always ending with some frightful picturing of the wrath of God that follows infidels. Consider, too, her ever-active zeal, her stubborn will to make the world *believe* her little "word of God." See how she bids her missionaries fly to foreign shores, compass every isle, traverse every land, and tell in every various human tongue the precious echo of two thousand years ago. See how she *makes* her proselytes: when words of love or fear avail not to convert, how ready her resort to modes of force and stern implements of authority. How pliant all her "ministers of grace,"

few years ago, to turn from mercy's work and serve occasions of severity — go from saving souls to killing men, as it seemed in malice, but verily to cut faith's way by all the horrid arts of that grim monster now called "the Man of Sin." I don't confound *Ecclesia* with him: he the treacherous power, she the unconscious instrument; he the seductive beast, and she the deluded victim; his the bold arrogance, hers the blind conceit; his the wrong, and hers *the great mistake.* Christianity is the co-working of Priestcraft and Superstition, and it is never easy to say which of the two predominates in the Church. This is the best reason that I know of why she, calling her lore a *mystery* above all human wits, has never intimated a desire to see it unraveled; always ready to swear to the identity of her religion and the Gospel of Jesus, yet denouncing every attempt to compare one with the other.

Clergymen have always claimed to be the only authorized public expounders of the Gospel. They have ever professed to be called and qualified for this office virtually by Jesus himself, who is said to have imparted the sacred unction of priesthood to his twelve

apostles, and thence to their ordained successors to the end of time; thus constituting the Christian Church the exclusive vehicle of salvation. Paul seems to have given rise to this ecclesiastical pretension, or at least to have sanctioned it, in his letters to Timothy and to the various churches of his time, in calling them collectively "the pillar and ground of the truth," and in his frequent declaration of being "called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ." The Church has partaken largely of the spirit of his saying, "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Sects have multiplied nevertheless, till versions of Paul's religion differ exceedingly. What then? Among all the bickering daughters of Zion there is no *name* but Jesus. Each claims to be the only orthodox, and each repeats of all the rest the same anathema.

Such are the *praises* of Zion;
Such is her goodly Profession,
And such the *look* of her calling;
She vaunteth the favor of Jesus;
But hath she a like of his spirit?
Hath she put on his example?

CHAPTER III.

CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH.

"Do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not." — MATT. XXIII. 3.

IN our estimation of men it is wise to distinguish what they *are* from what they profess or are reported to be. It is not the *name* of Jesus that we love and revere — not what the world has said of him, or he of himself, but the otherwise attested truth of his life, — the essential beauty of his self-hood. So the mere fame or ostentation of any person excites not our admiration, but rather our contempt, without a corresponding character.

Here is a piece of human wisdom which merits a general and unrestricted application to the subject of our present study. In judging of institutions and social bodies, we ought not to exercise less sagacity and scrutiny than in adjusting our views of personal

character. There is but one rule for forming a correct opinion either of individuals or societies; and that is one which no ecclesiastic can with any grace ignore. It was in reference to religious pretenders that Jesus said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits;" and there is no other valid way of determining whether Christians are sincere in calling him their Master.

Let this rule be applied to the Church. Let us judge the saints, not as they the world and one another, by sectarian shibboleths, but, even as their own Lord is expected in the end to reward them all, "according to their works," and I more than conjecture that she will seem all at once too little for her Reputation; by Profession too grossly imposing, or in Character basely deficient.

It is a notable fact, and ought to be notorious, that the so-called "Bride of Christ, the Lamb's Wife," is shamefully wanting in fidelity to her glorified Lord. The Church both belies her reputation and violates her profession, and the ears of all her adherents should tingle with her loud reproach. The most remarkable traits of her character are presump-

tion, infidelity and hypocrisy; but these are only accidental to her conduct, to which she is impelled by far other motives than her Lord ever sanctioned by precept or example. I shall not attempt her portrait, further than to show, notwithstanding the relationship she claims and the name she bears, how marvelously little she has ever had to do with Jesus and his Gospel.

SECTION I.

The Church cherishes certain dogmas, and enforces certain ordinances, independently of the word and example of Jesus.

All Protestants will agree with me when I accuse the Romish Episcopacy of abusing her pretended vicegerency; but I shall not detain the reader with Catholic enormities, for the reason that no person whose mental advancement is not already proof against them, will dare look into this volume. Nay, such is the force of ecclesiastical assumption and prejudice, that many who have been cradled in New England Orthodoxy, worshiping at the altars of

Puritanic godliness till their heads are white with age, believe in their very souls that it is *wicked to reason about their religion* as they do on any other subject. This is not definitely expressed in any written creed that I know of; but that it is as deeply rooted in the Christian mind as other articles of faith, is manifest in the sermons of every Sunday and in the conversations of believers on all occasions — by pastoral exhortations to believe without investigation, and by the universal sneer against free-thinking. In the same category is the unwritten tenet implied by the very fact that the Church *holds* her faith as a coin, and not a thing of growth. Every sect glories in having found the whole of religious truth, but imitates the man with one talent, and lays it up in the napkin of a profitless conservatism. Need I say that in all the teachings of Jesus there is nothing like this prejudice? It is impossible to make it consistent with any rational interpretation of the parable just alluded to. In the fragments of the Gospel which have been handed down to us, there is no discouragement to the exercise of Reason, and no intimation that Jesus indoctrinated his disciples with a sufficiency of relig-

ious truth, so that it were sinful to learn any more. According to the testimony of John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," he declared to many of them, on the very eve of his crucifixion, and among the last of his earthly communications, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now;" and Luke makes him ask the crowd who listened to his exhortations, after bidding them "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy," and suggesting, by a consecutive train of parables, a shorter and more inviting way of salvation than Priestcraft has ever dreamed of, "Why even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right?"

These two almost unwitting assumptions of the Church are interwoven with certain older shreds of traditional nonsense, which together underlie some of her more formal and positive declarations of faith; yet in the published Gospel there is no word of Jesus for the sanction of these or those.

In the class of spurious written tenets, and first in absurdity, is the notion of God as a triune being, involving three distinct, equal and infinite individualities, yet in their union constituting but one inseparable

Deity. *The Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Spirit*, are terms often used by Jesus, but never in such a sense. The word *Trinity* is not to be found in the New Testament, and the solecism of its Christian usage can hardly be traced to an older origin than the Council of Nice.

Among her stereotyped dogmas, the Church cherishes also the sacred oriental fable, that the first man and woman were created in a state of superlative purity, wisdom and happiness, from which ere long they fell into sin, entailing total depravity and perpetual misery on all the human race. But the evidence that Jesus believed and inculcated the same tale of conceit, is not to be found in the joint testimony of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

If the Church have not added variously to the teachings of Jesus, whence her discord? Protestantism shuns the embrace of her Catholic mother, calling her "the harlot;" the polluted mother disowns her unfilial child, and scolds for want of power to punish "the heretic." All modern sects recriminate each other, and even by believers ten to one all creeds are voted wrong. Each sermon that is

meant to expound is followed by nine to refute it; and the labor of every preacher is, to make the world believe that *he* came not from Babel.

Was Jesus a Papist, or a Protestant? and if not the former, was he yet a Partialist, or a Universalist? — a Methodist, a Baptist, a Quaker, or a Churchman, or exactly none of these? See the two desperate spirits of persecution and martyrdom! Were they born of the same evangelical truth? Was the faith of Calvin and that of Servetus equally sound? Were the Puritans no better Christians than the ecclesiastics from whom they dissented, and did they banish Roger Williams from *their* land of liberty for preaching the Gospel? or is Freedom of Conscience itself, as appreciated by all later sects, another heresy which Jesus never countenanced?

Of many ecclesiastical *ordinances* not in any wise authorized by Jesus, I will in this section specify but two.

1. *The observance of Sunday* as a holy day is a gross imitation of the Jewish Sabbath, for which there is no better reason, and no other ultimate authority, than that for circumcision and sacrifice. Jesus never

so much as recommended it. His example gave frequent offence to the followers of Moses; and when they called him a Sabbath-breaker, he exculpated himself without denying the charge. Sunday has been styled "The Lord's Day," not in reference to any precept or practice of his, but with appropriation to the alleged time of his Spiritual Ascension, and its hebdomadal commemoration by his followers. Such a use of the day would answer its end, if this were understood and that were voluntary: in these terms, it ought to be acceptable to all; in any other, to none. Sunday as the Church has made it — a mere substitute for a Hebrew custom, and compulsory at that — is no vehicle of honor to Jesus, who dishonored the observance in his own life. It is related consentaneously by Matthew, Mark and Luke, that he on one occasion referred to the commands of Moses, in answer to the query of one, what he should do to "inherit eternal life;" and though he specified all that were needful to "be perfect," he uttered not a word about the Sabbath. In fact, there is not in the whole New Testament a single precept of Jesus in favor of keeping Sunday as the Church enjoins.

2. The most sacred of all the institutions of the Church is her *written Revelation.* She assumes that the compilation of scriptures called the Bible is "the word of God," and that as such it is the ultimate of all religious inquiry; a light superior to Nature — a guide to the soul of man above Reason. She has set up this book as the fixed standard of faith and the all-sufficient rule of human life — as containing all that is requisite for our salvation. She has enacted that this is the *only* word of God, and denounced as likely to be damned all who at different times have questioned either its presumed authenticity or completeness.

Now, there happens to be no evidence that Jesus thus imposed his own conceptions of Truth and Right as the highest for Man. He never intimated, according to what remains of his cherished lore, that anybody would be inspired to write out what he had spoken to his disciples, and that after his departure from Earth such scriptures should be received as the *ne plus ultra* of Revelation. He never taught that the writings of Moses and the prophets, as well as the biographies of himself and his first disciples, should

be revised and abridged by Constantine: that the Council of Nice, the creature of that wicked monarch, should make this "Word of God" for all Christendom to the end of time; *out of fifty Gospel histories compiling four and burning forty-six!* and that this Bible thus made ought to be accepted as "the only and sufficient rule of faith and practice." But this the Church has done, without consulting Jesus.

SECTION II.

The Church does not employ all the maxims of Jesus, nor copy the whole of his example.

It is singular that any Christian sect should leave out of its creed and discipline any plain injunction of its adored Head; yet none is to be exempted from this charge, of which there are specifications almost without number.

Jesus taught that men should "resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if a man sue thee at the

law, and take away thy goods, ask them not again." The Church has never attempted to enforce this maxim, nor signified by any approving act that she has adopted it even in sentiment. A nonresistant is as unpopular in the vestry as in the street, and is as often a lawyer as a Christian.

"Give to him that asketh thee," said Jesus, "and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away: lend, hoping for nothing again." Has the Church written this among her saving ordinances? I trow not.

"Swear not at all," is among the unqualified precepts of Jesus; but the Church interprets it only of idle and unmeaning oaths. Her maxim is, swear only in the juridical form, and in earnest.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth," is sometimes recommended in sermons, though the advice is generally thought to be impractical, or appropriate to eminent saintship. The preacher rarely alludes to it as one of the essentials of salvation; and covetousness is never so positively denounced as just before a pulpit appeal to Mammon, somehow "for the Lord's sake." Money-making and hoarding are sinful only

when they are excused by no religious seeming. In the Church they are often praised, as needful aids to godliness. A zealous old divine once wrote the rule of available piety thus: "*Get* all you can, *save* all you can, and then *give* all you can;" not in ways of private charity, understand, but into "the Lord's treasury," as Priestcraft long ago christened its own coffers.

"Judge not, and ye shall not be judged," urged the Wonderful Counselor of Christendom; "condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned." Can anything be more notorious than the way religionists everywhere set at naught this admonition? In former times, when ecclesiastics were in power, did they not make and avow it to be their mission to judge and condemn all who withstood their adverse authority? The smallest difference of opinion generally produces strife *in* the Church, and there is no end to the war of sects. Church-rule everywhere and always has been characterized by intolerance, dictation and persecution, according to power. Do not the ministers of grace, so called, still make a virtue of denouncing "the wicked"? or is the pulpit beginning to assume

a more apposite function than that of dealing damnation on the presumed outlaws of its own misfashioned divinity?

Here then are no less than five distinct maxims of Jesus which the Church makes no part of her religion. They were substantial points in the Sermon on the Mount; but that, in fact, is of very little authority among mere Christians.

SECTION III.

The Church utterly repudiates some of the plainest precepts of Jesus.

Not only have the daughters of Zion, affecting the righteousness of Jesus, taken liberty to make such rules of action as they like, without a care for what their Lord approves, but of his teachings some they let alone, and others they reject, as quite at odds with their sinister aims.

"When thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face," said he, "that thou appear not unto men to

fast;" considering that the utility of occasional abstinence is in what least concerns a neighbor. But see how his mistaken followers overlook the thing and catch at the shadow. Fast now-a-days is all show—pretence and nothing else. The magistrate of State *proclaims* it, and the Church *acts* it before the world: a late rising and a hearty *break*-fast, religious lounging with a laugh-lorn face till supper-time, and then, I need not say what appetite provokes and what ensues, till in a nightmare end the pious blues. If the cotemporary disciples of Jesus were given to fasting in this way, it is no wonder that he counseled them to make such religious folly as secret as possible.

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven." The sects generally pretend to believe that; yet many of them put their "charity-box" in a sightly part of the synagogue, that none may seek in vain the meed of worldly eyes; and sometimes they print the praise of able givers, as an incentive to heartless liberality.

"When thou prayest, enter into thy closet," was the plain advice of Jesus, "and when thou hast shut

the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." Thy formulary subjoined to this direction is strikingly apt, and appropriate to such juvenile souls as are more inclined to imitate teasing children than to trust in the All-Wise and Ever-Good. Nevertheless, there is loud praying all over Churchdom, and God is oftener reminded of what the heathen want, than besought to "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him," added the World's best preacher, thus implying that prayer in any wise is a privilege only of such as have little faith and less knowledge; but the Church has made it *duty*, and her whimpering nurselings think they merit something by filling the ears of Providence with their vain wishes.

Finally, Jesus taught VIRTUE as the means of salvation, not mere doctrinal faith and formal worship. He put no such emphasis on *profession* as the Church does. He would have his disciples *be*, rather than *seem*. "Not every one that saith unto *me* Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that *doeth the will of my Father* which is

in Heaven. Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, *and doeth them*, is like a wise man who built his house upon a rock." So ends the discourse on Olivet, which contains nothing distinct from Natural Morality.

On an occasion when this rational preacher had just nonplused the Sadducees, in a question of Man's Immortality, one of the scribes, who had "heard them *reasoning* together," came and asked him, "Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is One Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more

than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

At another time "one came and said to him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother; and Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven."

I have interposed these two incidents in the memoirs of Jesus, because in them he seems to have uttered himself fully, and very intelligibly, as to the gist of human salvation. And now, most candid reader, what is it? — what, in the mind of Jesus,

as deduced from the foregoing citations? A thing of creeds? No. Of outward worship? No. Is it the Atonement, either Jewish or Christian? No: there is no hint of these in those conversations of Jesus, nor of anything vicarious for the hope of mortals. *It is plain Morality* — VIRTUE, *and nothing else:* this is the "saving ordinance" of the *original* Gospel, according to these two unimpeachable witnesses, by whose accepted testimony that is found to be rooted and grounded in Reason. The young man who would have secured a treasure in Heaven on easier terms than to part with a portion of his "great possessions" for the comfort of others in want, went away sorrowful, because he did not quite love his neighbor as himself; yet with the understanding that there is no contingency about salvation except that of choice, and that Character is essential to Happiness here and hereafter.

How different the lesson prepared for the nurselings of the Church: *Believe* and *profess religion.* Believe in positive Evil, in the Fall of Man, the Wrath of God, the Devil, and Hell. Believe in Moses and the Prophets, according to the doctrine of

Divine Inspiration, and in the malevolent Jehovah of the Hebrews, whose bloody sacrifices typified the miraculous "Lamb of God which taketh away the Sin of the World." Believe in the Godhead of the Catholic Church, — the correlative Father, Son and Holy Ghost; that the second was begotten by the third as well as the first, and that the three are only one. Believe that Jesus is God and the Son of God; that he died to save mankind, and that the Jews, in the act of crucifying him, were the chosen priests of Human Redemption. *Believe* these dogmas: you cannot know them, yet it is impious to question their sacred authority. Renounce Reason; profess a miraculous conversion, but confess your continued sinfulness in the same breath; throw away all hope of Heaven through moral culture, and look back to the murder of your Savior for your salvation from everlasting fire. Be unusually religious on Sunday; take truth only from the canonical Scriptures; love Christians, hate and avoid all unbelievers, pray for the far-off heathen, and hope hereafter to sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and a few other saints, in the kingdom of a partial Deity, from which

the most of mankind are thrust out with "weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth."

So much the Church has had to do with Jesus.
She has done all that lips and knees can do
To glorify his *name* — has made *that thing*
Her God, and called the world to worship it.
But the truths he taught she has little known,
And little cared to know. To live or teach
His Gospel, has been none of her concern.
His character she does not even ape;
His righteousness she does not wish her own,
Save as a bridge over the lake of Hell.
She makes a god of Jesus less than Man:
For, having crucified his humanhood,
She sends his rare example back to Heaven,
And turns from worshiping to eat the offered Lamb!

PART SECOND.

WHAT JESUS HAD TO DO WITH CHRISTIANITY.

"Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" — MATTHEW VII. 16.

HAVING partially exposed the unreal and pretended affection of the Church for Jesus, it is proposed, in this second division of our integral study, to consider in what sense he stands related to her doings, and to what extent these have accorded with his teachings. Yet, I profess my own conviction, in the outset, that this relation is nothing active on his part; that Jesus was no supernatural Christ, and that Christianity, instead of representing his Gospel, is an invention of men who followed other influences than a just appreciation of what he inculcated and exemplified in his life.

Christianity, by which I mean the whole sectarian medley of ecclesiastical faith and worship, is based on the ancient and vulgar sentiment of *divine alienation;* being in itself nothing but a grand expedient for recovering the favor of God, through the principle of *atonement.* The only possible explication of this human predicament is the oriental tale of Adam and Eve, which the ignorant attribute to the inspired pen of Moses, but which the well-informed know to be but a mere waif of Persian mythology. The Church has adopted the anonymous assumption, together with the spurious rationale of the thing, with no better reason than having found them in a parcel of parchments by sacerdotal authority, labeled "Sacred." She holds for a religious truth, and in part predicates salvation on the belief, that, almost simultaneously with "the fall of man," the Theic Trinity sat in deliberate council on the event and its issue, whence resulted the Christian "Plan of Redemption." The Father was angry with his human offspring for the sin and folly whereby Paradise had been broken up, and averred his irrevocable purpose to execute the sentence of eternal death

already passed on the notorious trespassers in his orchard. The Son, of a more merciful temper than the Sire, was moved with compassion toward the offending pair, considering their youth and natural indiscretion, and measuring their guilt inversely to their temptation; yet, aware of the rigorous disposition of the Paternal Deity, he made no attempt at dissuasion, but signified his willingness to satisfy the demands of *Punitive Justice*, and urged his desire to suffer himself in Man's stead; by which act he proposed at once to vindicate the Divine Honor, and rescue from immediate destruction a goodly work of Creative Power. To these ends it was finally agreed by the consulting and consenting Three that the Holy Ghost should in due time visit a human virgin, and thus prepare the way for the *Immaculate Incarnation* of the Second Person in the Godhead; which decision of that First Council of Divines was subsequently verified and fulfilled in the person of Jesus, who, for this reason and no other, has been called the Christ, and "the Lamb of God which taketh away the Sin of the World;" having, by the offering of his own body on the

vicarious Cross, restored Man to the normal favor and patronage of the placated Father. This is the core of Christianity, whose sectarian differences constitute varieties only in the pulp.

Now, if this "Plan of Redemption" were founded in Truth, it should have been promulgated and demonstrated to the understanding of all who have any interest in it, from the beginning of its object to the end of its effect. Besides, not only should Jesus have known and professed himself to be the Christ, in the above sense, but the fact ought to have been perfectly understood in his own day, by all whom it concerned. But the grand presumption is favored by neither of these considerations. This scheme of human salvation was not published till several thousand years after the story of Man's ruin; and the Jews, through whom the Church has derived the latter doctrine, have never comprehended that of the World's redemption by the expiating sufferings of *any* Christ; though, if the mediatorial office of Jesus were really such as has been described, they must have typified it in their daily sacrifices from Aaron to Caiaphas. As to the pains which Jesus

took to impress his cotemporary disciples that such was his character and mission, we may learn from their own writings, whence we derive the fact that every one of them had to be converted to Christianity after the Crucifixion. To some this may sound like mere assertion; but I proceed to justify these remarks by more exacting data.

CHAPTER I.

JESUS NOT THE CHURCH'S CHRIST.

"And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Who say the people that I am? They answering, said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again. He said unto them, But who say ye that I am? Peter answering, said, The Christ of God. And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing."—LUKE IX. 18—21.

IF Jesus *was* the Christ of God, why was he unwilling that his disciples should make known the fact? It may be fancied that he feared the Jews, who sought his legal proscription and death as a religious innovator; or that he dreaded popularity in another class, lest, according to John 6: 15, he should be thrust into political attitudes which he wished not to assume; or, what is more plausible still, that he anticipated the inconvenience of a teasing throng of worshipers, whom nothing but secrecy and decep-

tion would enable him to elude. Each and all of these suggestions would befit the character of Jesus as a *man*, much better than with the attributes of that Divine Personage who, in the estimation of modern doctors of divinity, was possessed of "all power in Heaven and Earth." If Jesus had been thus endowed, he could have had no motive whatever to hide or suppress the truth, so far as inquiry has ever penetrated the mysterious veil of his personality and mission. My opinion therefore is, that Jesus wished it might never be reported that he was the Christ, simply because he was not. Before proceeding to substantiate this opinion, however, I introduce the following statement, as embodying all the evidence I can conceive of, in favor of the doctrine I am to refute: —

1. Almost everybody in Christendom at the present day, as well as our ancestors for many past centuries, *believes* that Jesus was the Christ, in the ecclesiastical sense of the word.

2. There is little reason to doubt that all the writers of the New Testament cherished the same belief. One of them has recorded that Jesus him-

self, being interrogated by the high priest at Jerusalem, the night before his tragical death, acknowledged that he was the Christ; and another relates that he professed as much to a certain woman of Samaria, whom he accidentally met at Jacob's Well.

3. The persecuting Jews called him Christ before Caiaphas and on the Cross. So on other occasions did Philip, Andrew, Peter, and John the Baptist, whose testimony would have been confirmed by that of several devils, had not Jesus rebuked them and "suffered them not to speak."

4. It is written, I know not whether by Matthew, or one of his editors, that Joseph, the husband of Mary, *dreamed* that the Holy Ghost was the father of Jesus; and, if there was no mistake in that dream, he must have been the Christ.

5. Moreover, some fifty years after the event, a story was found circulating in the suburbs of Jerusalem, which Luke, or some transcriber and reviser of his narrative, deemed worthy of preservation; namely, that on the night following the birth of Jesus, an angel came down from Heaven and made known the fact to certain shepherds who sojourned

with their flocks in the rural district about Bethlehem — a small town in Judea rendered memorable by this event; and that those shepherds affirmed that that angel designated the babe Jesus, then lying in a manger at Jerusalem, as "Christ the Lord."

The rational reader will discover in this statement of credences nothing which goes to the bottom of *belief*, and therefore no positive evidence. The best of it is only sacred hearsay. Yet I do not set it at naught. Some of its points demand a serious, though not formal treatment; and in the course of my general argument, all shall be disposed of according to merit.

SECTION I.

Jesus not named Christ during his life in the body.

The notion has generally obtained not only that Jesus was the Christ, but that he was so named from his birth. The occasion of this mistake is doubtless

the fact that the two names, though distinct in their origin and primitive application, have been for a very long time employed indifferently as well as conjointly to designate one and the same personage. This usage of the early Christian writers, being promoted by the later popularity of their cause, was established at length by the common literature of Christendom; and in this way many have been led to suppose that *Christ* was the proper surname of Jesus when he sojourned on Earth. A careful reading of the New Testament, however, will suffice to dissipate this illusion.

It is well to consider that if Jesus had been named Christ from his infancy, then had the supposed prophecy concerning his birth been falsified in this particular. The angel announced the maternity of Mary in connection with these words: "She shall bring forth a son, and *thou shalt call his name* JESUS;" and afterward it is related that Joseph "called his name *Jesus*." According to Luke, another angel predicted the same things to Mary; and this writer adds that "when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, *his*

name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb."

It is nowhere expressed in the scriptures that Jesus was named, or generally called, Christ, during his life in the form. In the genealogy prefacing the book of Matthew it is stated that "Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ." This of course was written after the death of Jesus, whose proper name is here plainly distinguished from his later appellation, by grammatical construction; for the text is equivalent to the proposition that *the son of Joseph and Mary, who was named Jesus, is now, in the writer's day, called Christ.* This is true at present in a far wider sense than when it was written; for believers in the Divinity of Jesus then were comparatively few. The expression was as just when employed by the evangelist in reference to certain admiring survivors of Jesus, as in the mouth of Pilate, calling to the mob of his accusers and demanding, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" Afterward he set "the superscription of his accusation" over the Cross —

"*Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews!*" If *Christ* had been a part of the proper name of Jesus, would not Pilate have written it there?

The quotation from Luke, which I have selected as a motto of this chapter, demonstrates with as much conclusiveness as may be predicated of any Bible assertion, that Jesus was very rarely called, or imagined to be, the Christ, in his life-time; for, if his disciples had believed and professed the same doctrine that his later worshipers have cherished and promulgated, no such dialogue between him and them could have occurred, as is related by three of the evangelists.

This view is further confirmed by the fact that in all his biographies extant he is commonly named *Jesus*. Writing as the evangelists did some time after the Crucifixion, it was natural for them to apply to his sacred memory the divine epithet which was beginning to obtain concurrently with the rise of believers in his Divinity. Accordingly it is found, by criticizing their style, that when they utter their own convictions merely, they sometimes put *Christ* for *Jesus*; but in all cases when narrating the inci-

dents of his life and citing the language of coincident speakers, they employ his proper name. In no one instance do they represent his contemporaries as addressing him by the divine title *Christ*, except that of his persecutors, who "smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, who is it that smote thee?"

No other theory but the one here suggested will sufficiently account for the fact that Jesus is much oftener called Christ by Paul and all the later writers of the New Testament, than by his four special biographers. In the fourth book of his memoirs, the word *Jesus* occurs 233 times, and the word *Christ*, with various applications, only 21 times. I collate this verbal criticism with another on Paul, who in his first letter to the Corinthians designates Jesus by the appellation *Christ* 46 times, and calls him by his proper name only twice. The compilers of our evangelic history have represented Matthew and John as putting this divine title for the cognomen of Jesus twice each, and Mark once. In Luke *Jesus Christ* seems never to have been heard of, for this writer does not so name the hero of his narrative at all. In

this respect there is a striking contrast between the diction of the evangelists and that of Paul, who, though he never saw Jesus in the flesh, and knew nothing of his character and mission except by inference, or more correctly presumption, as will appear in the process of our argument, repeats the above misnomer in all his epistles about 180 times.

All this must look very strange and unaccountable to one who still fancies that *Christ* was the surname of Jesus from his infancy. The only explicative truth is, that hardly anybody thought that Jesus was the Christ, till after his pure and unexampled life had terminated in a remarkable and cruel death. Then, in the yearning bosoms of his life-associates, reverence ripened into faith. Then began the labor of the apostles so-called, as announced in the sermon of Peter at the Pentecost: "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Indeed, to establish this assumption, now beginning to be conceived and cherished by the most intimate disciples of Jesus, but never before preached by anybody, is truthfully declared by one of the evangelists

to be the very end for which they wrote. "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book," declares John in the close of his narrative; but these are written *that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ*, the Son of God." Thus conclusive is the evidence that *Christ* was not written nor spoken as the surname of Jesus till some time after his departure from the sphere of sensuous life.

Here then is a fact which stands directly opposed to the doctrine of a supernatural Savior of the World. Had Jesus been the Christ, he must have known and named himself accordingly. Why should his parents be ignorant of the fact? Why should the angel of his annunciation name him otherwise or less than what he was? These questions demand the same answers as the following. Why did his disciples name him Christ after his spiritual ascension? Simply because they *believed* that he *was* the Christ. Why then did they not so name him during his sublunary life? Verily, because while he was with them they were less mistaken as to his manhood, and did not suppose that he was anybody but JESUS.

SECTION II.

Jesus himself did not profess to be Christ in the sense contended for by his worshipers.

In all the memoirs of Jesus it does not appear that he took any pains to make himself known as the Christ, either in the Jewish or Gentile acceptation. He seems, indeed, to have lived very obscurely till he was about thirty years old, having made no reputation out of Nazareth, except that occasioned by a visit to Jerusalem in his youth, when his singular manners and precocious understanding are said to have stirred a little the humor of the doctors; and even at home being thought very little of, according to his own saying that "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country and in his own house," as well as the record of John that "his brethren did not believe in him." From his birth to within three or four years of his death, everybody, including his own kindred, seems to have forgotten the dream of Joseph, the angel visits to Mary and the shepherds, and the whole wonder-tale of Holy Ghost paternity and the prognostic star which turned the heads of all the eastern

Magi. There is no mention of these prodigies in any of the reported conversations of Jesus with his various associates through life, and no intimation that he was ever informed of them. How marvelously stupid the people of those times must have been, to be "musing of John, whether he were the Christ or not," as Luke tells us, for thirty years after the Messiahship of Jesus had been thus publicly and miraculously signified! What profound blockheads too must have been nearly all his disciples, never to be reminded of what he *was to be* by what he wrought! How strange that they should remember so well the old prophecies about an impersonal Christ, and yet forget entirely the predictions of their own day, confirmed by angel hosts and special motions of a very particular star, that all was to be fulfilled in the notable personage before their eyes! For me it is easier to believe that such wonders never happened, than that everybody should have so conspired to keep silence about them till about fifty years after their occurrence. This much is certain, that the doctrine which these tales were made to sustain did not originate with Jesus,

neither did he sanction it. He never taught that he was the Christ, nor encouraged anybody to think so.

All the evangelists agree in representing Jesus as a man of no reputation before his thirtieth year; and then as being introduced for the Messiah by John the Baptist. "And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us: what sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as saith the prophet Esaias." They further inquired, "Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water; but there standeth one among you *whom ye know not.* The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world! This is he

of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me; for he was before me. *And I knew him not;* but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. *And I knew him not:* but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God."

Connecting this account with the first chapter of Luke, it is very singular that John did not know Jesus, when their mothers were cousins; and more especially considering the similar circumstances of their birth, the intimacy of Mary and Elizabeth during the last three months of the latter's pregnancy, which coïncided with the first three of Mary's, the sympathetic joy of the two mothers so expressively interchanged at their first meeting after their interviews with Gabriel, and, most of all, the relative missions of the two sons, as announced to the parents of

each before their birth. Is it true, then, that John, as well as Jesus, was kept in ignorance of all these prognostics and predictions of their future eminence which Luke has enlarged upon? How could the two blessed mothers so effectively conceal their mutual joys, or withhold the pretty stories which would have pleased the boys so well? Verily, there is no such miracle on record. Let us believe all we can.

It is remarkable that none of the contemporaries of Jesus predicated their faith in his Messiahship on the assumption that he taught the doctrine. It is always represented as a matter of inference, never as being grounded in his testimony. What John the Baptist inferred from the vision of a dove descending upon Jesus, Andrew took from his lips, and going to his brother Peter, declared at once, "We have found the Messias." Philip also imbibed faith from the same word, and went to Nathanael, saying, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth *the son of Joseph.** Nathanael saith unto him, Can any good thing come

* Is it likely that Philip had ever heard of Joseph's dream?

out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and said unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, *Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou?* Thou shalt see greater things than these." Nicodemus also came to Jesus, saying, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; *for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*" Thus it appears that the first believers were persuaded by other influences than the word of Jesus.

We are told that Jesus was often importuned as to his supposed Divinity; and to the direct question whether he were the Christ, he is said to have answered variously: sometimes with apparent aversion, sometimes with ambiguity, three or four times in the

affirmative, but generally in the negative. Here is a problem which I know of but two methods of solving. One, according to the opinion that the original scriptures have been variously corrupted by the Bible-makers, is that of trying contradictory statements by general comparison. By this rule it is found that Jesus is oftener said to have denied than owned that he was the Christ. Besides, the statement of Mark — that when the High Priest demanded, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? *Jesus said, I am*" — is contradicted by the other three evangelists. When St. John makes Jesus say, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true;" and also, "*Though* I bear record of myself, yet my record *is* true;" the best use of such discrepancies is to put us on the track of less obvious ones. *If* Jesus declared, "There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true: ye sent John, and he bare witness unto the truth;" it is well to inquire what is the special value of this statement, if the same John, after having borne his testimony in words, sent two of his own disciples — being in Herod's keeping and not permitted to go him-

self, to ask Jesus, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

The better solution of the problem in question is that which turns on the diverse meanings of the word *Christ*. Without admitting so much as a positive belief that Jesus answered the same verbal question in precisely so many different ways as are imputed to him, it is possible to explain how he might have done so with strict propriety, and yet without acknowledging, or purposely insinuating, that he was the Christ, in the sense contemplated by the Jewish doctors of those days, or that of the Christian doctors of later times. This I shall undertake in the next section.

It is still further to be observed that Jesus spoke of Christ in the third person, and in such terms as nobody who heard him at the time could have thought applicable to himself. "While the Pharisees were gathered together," as Matthew asserts, "Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord saith unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand till I make thine enemies

thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word." Now, everybody that heard this argument of Jesus knew that *he* was a descendant of David: how then could he profess to be the Christ?

Moreover, agreeably to the citation at the beginning of this chapter, the Sage of Nazareth "straitly charged his disciples" not to tell anybody "that he was Jesus the Christ." Here is no qualification in circumstance nor limitation as to time; and had Peter and others to whom this interdiction was addressed kept the word of their own instructor, his name would have been only *Jesus* to this day; Humanity had been more ennobled by his reputation, and his example would have been more effective inasmuch as it had seemed more imitable.

Finally, it is not to be doubted that the Nazarene Reformer, by the novelty of his convictions, the frank fidelity of his tongue, and the earnest working of all his living powers, incurred the religious displeasure of the conservative Jews. According to the united testimony of the four evangelists, the keepers of the synagogue plotted his destruction from the beginning of his pub-

lic career. They wished, however, to cover their malignant purpose with at least a semblance of justice. They therefore employed spies, eaves-droppers and artful inquisitors, to dog him in his private walks, and to criticize his popular teachings; to propose captious questions and draw him into disputes, under pretext of seeking information, but really to "entangle him in his talk," and so find the means of legally accusing him. But the longer this method was tried, the less it promised. The machinators were generally defeated, and their proposed victim was safe, less for superior shrewdness than the natural discretion of honesty. Sick of this bootless game, they chose at length a more efficacious though less specious project. They suborned men to swear to what they wanted. Having clandestinely provided for his legal proscription, at the right conjuncture a mob was sent to take him, by whom he was seized in the night and hurried away to the house of the high priest, where he was kept until morning, suffering all kinds of abuse at the hands of his ruffian keepers. "As soon as it was day," to continue this account in the language of Luke, "the elders of the people, and the chief priests,

and the scribes, came together, and led him into the council, saying, *Art thou the Christ? Tell us.* And he said, If I tell you, ye will not believe; and if I ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all, *Art thou then the Son of God?* And he said unto them, *Ye say that I am.* And they said, What need we any further witnesses? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth. And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ, a King. And Pilate asked him, saying, *Art thou the King of the Jews?* And he answered him and said, *Thou sayest it.* Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, *I find no fault in this man.*" John gives the reply of Jesus in this juncture thus: — "*Thou* sayest that I am a king. To *this* end was I born, and for *this* cause came I into the World, *that I should bear witness unto the Truth.*" His previous self-defence before Caiaphas is also preserved

by this evangelist. The high priest demanding something about his doctrine, "Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the World; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by, struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" Thus he challenged his accusers, who failed to convict him in three distinct arraignments, and against whose injudicial proceedings Pilate was constrained to protest in the strongest terms. "Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people," said he; "and behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in the man touching those things whereof ye accuse him." Thus it appears that the Jews, with all their intrigues and stratagems, were unable to prove, to the satisfaction of a candid man, that Jesus professed to

be the Son of God, or ever admitted that he was the Christ, in any miraculous sense.

SECTION III.

Jesus accepted the doctrine and fulfilled the character and mission of A *Messiah, only in a natural and rational sense.*

The word *Christ*, in different times, has represented several vague notions, having each a separate origin, but drawn at length by religious speculation into a seeming oneness. It is necessary to dissect this fact, and to discriminate between the primitive uses and derivative abuses of the word, in order to a just interpretation of certain scriptures wherein it occurs. It seems to me that we are not indebted to Jesus for any thought which either this term or its Hebrew synonym is fitted to express. It is certain that he rarely employed that in his mother tongue, and never in a way to sanction any ecclesiastical

theory to which it stands related in the minds of men.

It is apparent, from many passages in the New Testament, that the Jews were thoroughly indoctrinated concerning Christ and the time of his advent, long before the birth of Jesus. "The people were in expectation," declares Luke, "and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not." From this text and others of like suggestiveness, many have imbibed the sentiment that the character and coming of Christ had been clearly defined and predicted by the old prophets, and that whatever the Jews seem to have anticipated of the mystical personage, was derived from the Scriptures of our Old Testament. I am persuaded that this impression is erroneous. A critical reading even of the Gospel histories would correct it. The Jews had their dogmas touching the lineage, temporal and local appearing, and mission of their Messiah; but these were not in all respects harmonious, which indicates that their source was not very authentic. "Some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said that Christ cometh of the seed of

David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" Others said, "When Christ cometh no man knoweth whence he is." The woman of Samaria, whom Jesus is said to have met at Jacob's Well, professed to "*know* that Messias cometh, which is called Christ;" and that "when he is come *he will tell us all things.*" Where did she get this information? Surely not from our canonical books. It is probable that the people of those times were largely inoculated with what was called "the tradition of the elders," as well as by various scriptures which our Christian censors have not thought worth preserving. Be this as it may, it must be acknowledged that the Old Testament predictions concerning Christ, if indeed there be any that merit the designation, are far less numerous and pointed than the evangelists are thought to signify.

The word *Messiah* is not to be found in our English version of the Pentateuch, the Psalms of David, nor in all the Prophets except Daniel, and in him only twice. The word *Christ* does not occur once in the Old Testament. The former of these words occurs in the Hebrew and the latter in the

Greek version indeed many times; but as those scriptures are rendered into our language, the terms are translated invariably, according to their literal signification, *the anointed:* an epithet of general application to kings, priests, popular chieftains, and all great functionaries of society. By historical usage the expression properly denotes the subject of official consecration to any important work, by pouring oil ceremoniously on the head: as in the case of Saul, the first king of Israel, of whom it is related that "Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because *the Lord hath anointed thee* to be captain over his inheritance?" This ceremony was performed with greater pomp in other times, and was equivalent to a coronation in modern Europe. The custom was not confined to the Jewish nation, nor was it Hebrew in origin. The rite itself grew out of the practice of ancient pugilists who prepared themselves for combat by denuding and greasing their bodies; making the flesh slippery, that one might the more adroitly elude the grasp of his antagonist. This object was of course not thought of in the later and more reputable appli-

cations of the ceremony, when a fanciful utility was substituted for the obsolete incentive.

Among the Jews this anointing became a *religious* ceremony. Saul having been anointed by "a prophet of the Lord," the king was called *The Lord's Anointed.* "And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king. Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the Lord."

We are afterwards told that "the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel;" which, by the way, is somewhat singular, considering that the king had not diminished in stature; for when Samuel brought him to the throne from his hiding-place "among the stuff," and moved shouts of admiration to his majesty, he specified no other trait of excellence but that the king-elect was "higher than any among the people, from his shoulders and upward." Yet this change of mind imputed to Jehovah is not a whit more remarkable than the reason

assigned for it in the fifteenth chapter of the First Book of Samuel, which ought to be consulted by the reader as one of the curiosities of Holy Writ, as well as for the light it throws on our subject generally.

But, leaving the ludicrous to copy more pertinent scriptures, "the Lord said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill thy horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons. And Samuel said, How can I go? If Saul hear of it, he will kill me. And the Lord said, Take a heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the Lord; and call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee. And Samuel did that which the Lord spake, and came to Bethlehem; and the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably? and he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the Lord; sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and

called them to the sacrifice. And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely *the Lord's Anointed** is before him. But the Lord said to Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath the Lord chosen this. Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the Lord chosen this. Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The Lord hath not chosen these. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he saith, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither. And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And

* The Lord's Christ.

the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward."

Here we have two respectable personalities of *the Lord's Anointed* — the English of *Jehovah's Messiah*, and only a more intelligible expression for *the Christ of God.* It is not said that the Lord of the Jews ever repented having chosen David to reign over his "peculiar people;" rather that after a trial of forty years he found him to be "a man after his own heart." Hence, for I can think of no more likely reason, Jehovah purposed the establishment of a perpetual kingdom in Israel, to be administered by David and his posterity. Such divine partiality is not more remarkable than the complacent confidence with which the royal favorite announced the intelligence, together with his good will to requite the Lord. Having assembled all the princes of Jewry, the captains and stewards and magistrates and valiant men and subalterns of his realm, king David stood up, and, raising his voice, harangued the assembly on this wise: —

"Hear me, my brethren, and my people. As for me, I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building; but God said to me, Thou shalt nôt build a house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood. Howbeit the Lord God of Israel chose me before all the house of my father to be king over Israel forever: for he hath chosen Judah to be the ruler; and of the house of Judah the house of my father; and among the sons of my father he liked me, to make me king over all Israel: and of all my sons (for the Lord hath given me many sons) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel. And he said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts: for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father. Moreover, I will establish his kingdom forever, if he be constant to do my commandments and my judgments, as at this day."

Probably the people believed all that the king said, and thought their kingdom was established in the favor of God forever. So they taught their children,

and this opinion became hereditary. At length the nation fell into the power of foreign monarchs, and the people went into captivity; and this political mishap they supposed to be a temporal judgment of the Lord for their wickedness. Then they recalled the great words of David, and hoped and prayed for deliverance; and this the scribes, and priests, and prophets assured them, as they conceived, would be effected ere long by another *Anointed of the Lord* — a future King of the Jews, to be born of the house of David. This is the legitimate special meaning of the word *Messiah.* This is the notion according to which Jesus was most frequently asked if he was *the Christ.* It is enough to say, that had he manifested a disposition as well as ability to meet this earthly expectation of the Jews, they would doubtless have crowned a king to their own liking, instead of deriding and crucifying one who openly rebuked their religious conceit, and apparently frustrated all their national hopes.

Thus I have elaborated the Messianic myth of the Jews, which was nothing more nor less than their political dream — an expectation of *a powerful and*

patriotic king as the temporal redeemer of their nation. This was the qualified meaning of the word *Christ* among the Jews, till after the advent of Jesus; and the same notion must have been cherished in a manner by his own disciples to the end of his earthly teachings, if we may credit what Luke relates of them in his preface to the Acts of the Apostles: that, on seeing him "alive after his Passion," they inquired, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" This question is rather remarkable as coming from the apostles, considering that "the Kingdom," of which Jesus was almost always discoursing, was the very substance of his Gospel and "*not of this World.*" It does not appear from the doings of the Jews that they were half so dull of hearing. They accused Jesus of "saying that he himself is Christ, a King;" but they knew very well that he neither was, nor pretended to be, any *such* a Christ or King as they wished to see. The head and front of his offending was not that he claimed to be *their* Messiah, but rather that he abjured their doctrine and invalidated the grounds of their worldly hope. Without professing to teach and

act in fulfilment of any sacred prophecy in which they trusted, he stood before them in the essential character of *a* Christ that they religiously hated. Therefore they crucified him.

Believers in the Christism of Jesus have enlarged and spiritualized the primitive conception of *the Lord's Anointed.* Such was the wickedness of the Jews, it is no wonder that "the Redeemer of Israel" became, soon after their crucifixion of the worthy Nazarene, "the Savior of the World." It was much easier too for the disappointed followers of Jesus to find a new interpretation for their supposed prophecy, as well as a new form of faith, than to throw away their religion at once and entirely. Hence the doctrine that he whose kingdom was plainly "not of *this* World," had ascended to a throne in the heavens, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this World, but also in that which is to come." How acceptable to the downcast, discomfited disciples of Jesus, just after the strange crisis of his earthly mission, must have been this manner of preaching by Peter: —

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, 'I foresaw the Lord always before my face; for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved. Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.' Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of

Christ, that *his* soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens; but he saith himself, 'The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool.' Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

This explication of the old scriptures was new indeed, and singularly introduced by one who a few days before had denied his Lord and gone a fishing. Yet many gaped to hear, and called it the very Gospel of Jesus, which none had understood before, because till then "the Holy Ghost was not given." Peter and Paul therefore were more successful in making converts than Jesus; and there was no lack of docility in believers when the latter apostle was ready to enjoin: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Jesus Christ; who being in the form of God, thought

it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Thus the word *Christ* was spiritualized in its application to Jesus, who is thought to have eluded the attempt of some to make him a king on Earth, only to be enthroned in Heaven as "the King of kings and Lord of lords." But surely Jesus himself never made so immodest a profession among men, nor hinted his anticipation of such a dignity. The notion of his being a celestial king is not the true antithesis of his declaration, "My kingdom is not of this World;" for being further questioned, "Art thou a king then?" he answered, "*Thou* sayest that I am a king. To *this* end was I born, and for *this* cause came I into the

World, *that I should bear witness to the Truth.*" In fulfilment of this mission he had already told his inquisitors, "I spake openly to the World; I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing." Jesus never declared himself to be a king in any sense. The expression "*My Kingdom*" implies only what had been the burden of his teachings: that is, "the Kingdom of God," concerning which he uttered many plain parables, plain enough in themselves, but which none of his hearers could understand, because of their superstitious conceits. "The Kingdom of God is within you," said he; "it is as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." To what else do such figures of speech apply but to *the realm of Nature, where God only rules?*

The appellation *Christ* has had other and later qualifications, of which I shall say nothing here, both because Jesus was silent about them, which indicates

that they were not in vogue in his day, and because I shall have occasion to refer to the use the Church has made of them, in the next chapter.

There is one sense in which Jesus claimed to be *a* Christ, and *a* Son of God; and that, as I propose to show, was neither exclusive nor miraculous. Luke relates that the son of Joseph announced his mission as a public teacher, at Nazareth, "where he was brought up. As his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias: and when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, '*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because* HE HATH ANOINTED ME *to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*' And he closed the book and gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, '*This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*'

And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." This was the true mission of "the carpenter's son," for which he was *one* of "the Lord's anointed" by natural development. It was with equal truth that Isaiah had originally applied to himself the scripture which Jesus quoted. The prophet therefore was one Christ, and the Galilean Reformer another, in the same categorical sense. Isaiah employed the epithet to denote the divine instrumentality, or legitimate mission of Cyrus, to repress national arrogance for a season. There was nothing mysterious in this use of the word.

It was in a like rational sense that Jesus professed to be "the Son of God." It matters little what has been understood of the phrase, but only what he meant by it and what it properly signifies. The Jews thought he made himself God. "Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law I said Ye are gods? If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken, say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the World, Thou blasphemest, because I said unto you I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my

Father, believe me not: but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him."

If Jesus was the *Son* of God, he was not *God*. Speaking to the multitude, he said, "Call no man your *father* upon the Earth: for one is *your* Father which is in Heaven." He very commonly called God his Father in the same natural sense in which he thus represented all mankind. See his saying to Mary Magdalene, to whom "he appeared first" in spirit after his crucifixion: "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto *my* Father, and *your* Father; and to *my* God, and *your* God."

But there is another and better sense in which Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. John represents him as disputing with the Jews, and saying, "I speak that which I have seen with *my* Father; and ye do that which ye have seen with *your* father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye *were* the children of Abraham, ye would do the works of Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication: we have one Father,

even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me; for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." I know not whether Jesus ever made use of the very figures of speech here quoted; but I am persuaded that he recognized the moral distinctions thus specified. *Truth* and *Right* are positive terms, and our Happiness must ever depend on our estimate and use of what they signify. Jesus labored to inculcate these principles, presenting always his own pure example as the best elucidation of what he taught, and the most effective suasion to the love and practice of his doctrine. In this he professed to imitate the Father, and exhorted his disciples to do likewise, that they *might* be the children of their Father in Heaven. Paul afterwards wrote, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God;" and John had confidence to tell his brethren by faith, "Now we *are* the sons of God." Jesus was a Son of God in this very acceptable sense. He was a Truth-seeker

and a well-doer — a man of eminent Virtue, and so a minister of Righteousness among men. His Gospel was not only the news, but the explication of Immortality and Heaven — the Science of Human Salvation. By metonymy therefore he was the Savior of the World: but every one, to be saved, must be as much a Christ as he.

To conclude this chapter then: If Jesus was not surnamed Christ till after his sojourn among men; if he did not himself profess to be the Messiah either of the Jewish or subsequent ecclesiastical faith; if, forsooth, his life and teachings were a double refutation of both those creeds, then the Church's Christ was never Jesus, but a fabulous wight whose reputation is an enormous exaggeration of his character.

CHAPTER II.

CHRISTISM NOT THE GOSPEL OF JESUS.

"Take heed that no man deceive you: for many shall come in my name, saying I am Christ, and shall deceive many." — MATTHEW XXIV. 4—5.

JESUS has been commonly understood to say that many impostors would appear after his day, *calling themselves the Christ.* This construction of the clause "*legontes, ego eimi ho Christos,*" and that of "*hoti ego eimi,*" as in Mark and Luke, is quite inconsistent with one of the terms of the prediction; for, unless I have argued wholly in vain hitherto, how might one pretend *to be* the Christ *in the name of Jesus?* There never has been, and never can be, a fulfilment of the prophecy so interpreted. But, if we construe the saying so as to make *ego* stand for Jesus, no prediction ever uttered has been more completely, precisely and largely fulfilled than this: — "*Many*

will come *in my name*, saying that *I am Christ;* and will *deceive many*." Now, the promulgators of Christism have been *many;* they have all come *in the name of Jesus*, calling *him the Christ;* and in this they have *deceived* both themselves and all their proselytes.

Yet the fulfilment is more obvious in terms less creditable to the Church. Who but the most doting ecclesiastics will deny that the bulk of the clergy have been mere pretenders to Divine authority through Jesus? Of the long succession of popes, prelates and priests, who have followed the nominal lead of St. Peter, in arrogating vicarious prerogatives of the Most High, and all in the name of Jesus, what protestant does not know that the majority have been wily deceivers, to whom multitudes have bent the knee, as to *the Lord's Anointed*, with money in their hands, saying, "Take this, and give us the grace of God."

This trick of Priestcraft will be more thoroughly exposed in another place; but that *Jesus had nothing to do with it*, is what I purpose to show in this chapter. To this end it is needful to consider the

components of Christianity: *the Bible, the Church*, and *Christism;* the first containing the news of our strange Salvation, the next its human means, and the last its alleged Divine agency.

SECTION I.

Jesus had nothing to do with making the Bible, nor did he authorize the use which Christians have made of it.

Jesus was no Biblist. That he wrote none of the canonical scriptures, is universally admitted. It has been extensively believed, however, that the whole New Testament was written according to his suggestion, if not command; and, in general terms, that while he accepted the writings of Moses and the prophets as being in accordance with his own teachings, he more especially elected those of his apostles to represent the Gospel. But this notion is founded in fiction or fancy, rather than fact. It rests on the hypothesis of Divine Inspiration, — the assumption

that the whole Bible was written by the Holy Ghost, of whom all the prophets and evangelists were the mere amanuenses, and on the superstructive conjecture that the same Spirit of Inspiration was in alliance with Jesus to the end of writing out his oral communications to men. One may guess that Jesus had this very work in mind when he told his disciples, not long before they were deprived of his bodily presence, that after his departure the Holy Ghost would bring to their remembrance all that he had spoken. But this guessing is not quite justified by further inquiry; for it is nowhere stated in the Scriptures that the Holy Ghost had engaged to record the sayings and doings of Jesus, nor do the evangelists profess to have been aware of their own alleged agency as mediums. If, indeed, the Galilean Reformer himself, while on Earth, had been cognizant of the later facts touching the publication of his life and doctrine, as well as the significant accounts to which these writings have been ecclesiastically turned, it cannot be that he would have been altogether heedless of what so intimately concerned both his reputation and mission. It is likely that such matters of

mutual interest to him and his disciples, would have been seasonably discussed; and if so, the latter could not have failed to record such a demonstration of their Master's prescience. Their utter silence on this consequential point proves, it seems to me, that Jesus never anticipated the diverse histories which have been written of him and his Gospel, nor their questionable disposal by builders of the Christian Babel.

When Jesus spoke of "the Scriptures," he meant only those which were extant in his time; and he never taught men to regard *them* as "the Word of God." Sometimes, in reasoning with the Jews, he assumed the divine authority of Moses and the prophets, agreeably to their prejudice, for sake of conveying instruction by an argument which they could not reject; as in the following quotation from Matthew: —

"Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, 'Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders; for they wash not their hands when they eat bread?' But he answered, and said unto them, 'Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tra-

dition? For God commanded, saying, Honor thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.'"

Here Jesus speaks of a law of Moses as being a commandment of God; but when the Pharisees had gone their way, he argued on the same subject in a different vein. "Hear and understand," said he; "not that which goeth *into* the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh *out* of the mouth, *this* defileth a man. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. Then answered Peter and said, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are ye also without understanding?

Do ye not yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the stomach, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed *out* of the mouth, come forth from the heart; and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies; these are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man."

Thus, when laboring to instruct such as had no ears for sound doctrine, without the savor of some old authority, Jesus wisely adapted his method to the weakness and prejudice of men; but in addressing minds open to conviction, he made no compromise with superstition, commended Truth by no art but reasoning, and referred to no Word of God but Nature. This statement is well illustrated in the following extract from his inimitable Sermon on the Mount: —

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God *and* Mammon. Therefore I say unto

you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth *them*. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by anxiety can add one cubit to his stature? And why be anxious about your raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, will he not much more clothe you? O ye of little faith!"

Jesus never spoke of the Jewish scriptures in terms which justify the reverence, not to say *idolatry*, of later times. He usually referred to them as "the writings of Moses," "the prophecy of Isaiah," etc., but never with a form of expression implying a miraculous source of Wisdom. The negative position, that he did not inveigh directly against the belief of

the Jews in the Divine Authority of *their* scriptures, is no ground of argument in favor of the Christian doctrine of Bible Inspiration. The Rabbins of Jerusalem in the days of Jesus knew very little of our evangelical theology, and what they did know they rejected. The Trinity had not then been developed. The Son of God they presumed to be an abortion; the Holy Ghost made no demonstrations till the Christian Pentecost, and the Jews were rooted and grounded in the faith of One Jehovah. The Logos, or the Christian notion of the Divine Word of Infallible Wisdom, was not at that time conceived of. Besides, the Hebrew writings remained in scattered parchments; had not been gathered into one great text-book of Revelation, nor stereotyped and fixed beyond amendment, like our curtly finished Bible. There was therefore no occasion for Jesus to utter his formal condemnation of this then unthought-of idol of the unheard-of Christian Church.

That the Bible is a compilation of fragmentary scriptures, culled out of the sacred writings of several different nations, by three hundred and eighteen bishops of the Catholic Church, who convened for this

purpose at Nice in the year 325, being convoked, for ambitious ends, by the most arbitrary and unscrupulous tyrant of the fourth century, to whom the civil power of Rome and the ecclesiastical authority of all Christendom became at once subservient; that these censors of the Holy Ghost, as well as all human authorship, having determined that *four* out of about *fifty* narratives of the life and teachings of Jesus, together with now and then a parchment, and here and there an excerption, of Hebraic, Arabic, Chaldaic and Egyptic Holy Writ, were worth preserving, fashioned and finished this text-book of Divine Revelation in such wise as their own wits suggested; and that the same has been subsequently turned into English, and accepted by us as the Word of God, because the people have generally supposed it was, because all the successive functionaries of the Church from then till now have so taught, because the Council of Nice so decided, because Constantine so dictated: all this is as true as anything in history. But be it known to all Christendom, that if Jesus did not denounce such a trick of Priestcraft, as well as the epitome of superstition thus produced, it is only because this Bible-making and

christening happened so long after his time, that it was not possible for him to have anything at all to do with it.

SECTION II.

Jesus did not institute the Church nor any of its ordinances.

It is easy to gather from our evangelical history, that Jesus, though no believer in the Divine authority of Moses, though a positive dissenter from many of the doctrines and observances of the Jews, yet never quite denounced the theology of his own people, nor formally seceded from their synagogue, to which he was attached by birth, education and surrounding influences. He taught a new religion indeed, but made no attempt to introduce a new mode of worship. This position is implied almost to certainty by the entire silence of all his biographers as to any such movement of Jesus. Had the Church with its ordinances been set up in his day, or had he ordained its later establishment by his so-called apostles, the evangelists could hardly have omitted some account of the event. The fact of

this omission is presumptive evidence that Jesus was not the founder of the Church, nor the author of its ritual, either in person or by proxy.

To verify this statement, let it be further observed that the word *Church* is not to be found in our English version of Mark, Luke and John. In Matthew it occurs thrice, but only with the license of a later and less reliable authority than that of the original manuscript, as I will presently show. On one occasion Jesus is said to have counseled his disciples thus:

"Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, *tell it unto the church;* but if he neglect to hear *the church*, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican."

Now, to me, this whole passage seems worthy to be consigned to that numerous class of scripturish lections which in Griesbach's Testament are marked "spuri-

ous." For, in the first place, the spirit of the above precept does not harmonize with the tenor of the more authentic inculcations of Jesus, especially his Sermon on the Mount, in which he enjoined that men should *love* their enemies, *resist not evil*, and do good even to their persecutors. Indeed, the foisted advice is contradicted in the very next paragraph; wherein Peter being made to ask, "Lord, how oft shall my brother trespass against me and I *forgive* him? until seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until *seven* times, but *Until seventy times seven.*"

In the next place, the word *church* is here brought in so abruptly, as makes it incredible that Matthew wrote the passage. Consider the historical fact, that the synagogue was the only religious establishment in all Jewry before the advent of Jesus in Galilee, whose reformatory mission lasted not over three years; consider also the philological fact, that the word *ecclesia* was never used to designate a religious organization before its application to Christian worshipers; and then believe, if you can, that the evangelist would thus speak of *the Church* without any previous intimation of the new and special sense in which he employed an

old, familiar term. If, to save the scripture, we condemn the translation only, and say that *ecclesia* should be rendered *assembly*, agreeably to older and more general usage, then will arise the question *what assembly?* to which it can only be answered, that neither the synagogue of the Jews nor "the little flock" of Jesus appear ever to have been so designated by anybody. In truth, there is no way to dispose of this unsavory bit of Revelation without embarrassment, but to call it *spew-rious*. Very likely it is an interpolation; and as such I dismiss it.

Yet, apparently according to Matthew, Jesus once in his life is supposed to have spoken of building a church, in the following specious terms. Peter having affirmed very positively, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven. And I say unto thee, that *thou art Peter; and on this rock I will build my church*, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind

on Earth shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on Earth shall be loosed in Heaven."

Well said. If the Church here signified was to be built on Peter, it must have been after his denying with an oath that he knew Jesus, and even after his second conversion by the Holy Ghost at the Spiritual Pentecost. Doubtless this prophecy has been partly fulfilled at Rome, though the prediction partly followed the event. But some have argued that "*petra*" was a different rock from "*Petros*," and that Jesus meant to put himself—"the Spiritual Rock Christ"—for the main foundation, only intimating to Peter that he would become a useful *stone* in the ecclesiastical edifice. This is very far-fetched, not altogether unsuited to the pretensions of the papal hierarchy, and absolutely irreconcilable with the promissory context. Protestant believers would gladly be rid of this ungainful scripture, it smacks so strongly of the Vatican. Moreover, twist the pretended language of Jesus as you can, *the future tense* informs us still that the Church here spoken of had not begun to be built in the last year of the earthly life of Jesus. But rather than prop my argument by the text, I would maintain

that the passage is not genuine. If Jesus ever talked to Peter in the style above quoted, it is singular that he said so little, that he broke off so abruptly, that Peter should seem never to have thought again of a conversation so interesting to him as well as important to the cause in which he was then and subsequently engaged, and, most of all, that Jesus never mentioned the subject to the other apostles, whom he is supposed to have commissioned to organize the Church. But *how* was this to be done, and *when?* Be it observed that I have already cited *all* and the *only* historic evidence that Jesus had any notion of such a work. Admitting that he *had* apostles — that he chose twelve to whom "he gave power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease," which is by no means tenable, yet there is no scriptural intimation, save the hoax on Peter, that this matter of Church-building was anticipated in their appointment. Their commission, according to the compilation of Matthew, runs thus:

"Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any of the cities of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go

ye rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass, in your purses; nor yet scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves; for the workman is worthy of his meat."

See how temporary are all the terms of this apostleship. An ecclesiastical organization were of no avail, but would rather impede the execution of such labors as are here enjoined. Besides, there is no command, either here or elsewhere, that connects Jesus with the subsequent doings of the later-named apostles, in "ordaining elders in every city." They were to "go not in the way of the Gentiles," says the record; but how was this direction neglected in their first ecclesiastical "Acts."

No; there is no word of Jesus on record that implies a direction to any of his disciples, not excepting Peter, when or where to begin and how to proceed in instituting the Church. He did not even signify his

approbation of any ritual or outward worship whatever. Though it was his custom to resort to the synagogue with others, he never instructed his disciples to follow his example in a matter of religious ceremony. When he discommended the formalism of the Pharisees, he did not speak of any other formalism as being better. On the contrary, he set at naught ecclesiastical authority as a mere weapon of Priestcraft, discountenanced all unreasoning faith, as well as the forms of blind worship, and deplored every phase of sectarianism as antagonistic to the principles of his Gospel. This is evident from the whole tenor of his instructions. In them all you will find no discrimination of worth in the mere various creeds of men, and no stress of preference for different forms of conventional worship. He knew, much better than his nominal followers have conceived, that it is not the ritual which makes the religion of a people, any more than it is the manners that make the man. Therefore he sought to ameliorate the Jews, rather than to make void their erroneous sentiments; to give them truth in such measure as they were able to receive,

and in such fashion as they would not disrelish, instead of offending their prejudice by any new method of seeming virtuous. This is why we have the following credible testimony of Matthew: —

"Then spake Jesus to the multitude and to his disciples, saying, The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master; * and all ye are brethren.

* Our English version makes this Divine Master synonymous with Christ; but in the Greek Testament, according to Griesbach, "*ho Christos*" is marked as "spurious," in this connection.

And call no man your father upon the Earth; for one is your Father, which is in Heaven."

Is it from this counsel of the Nazarene that the Church has derived her episcopal orders? Do our Christian *Doctors* and small *Divines* discover any *ordinance* of Jesus in these pointed suggestions of his? How should they, if they have too little sagacity to see their own rebuke in the following shred of a sermon against their similitudes in self-righteousness of eighteen hundred years ago? —

"And he spake this parable," says Luke, "unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than

the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Again he said, "Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch? The disciple is not above his master; but every one that is perfect shall be as his master. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye; but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye."

How absurd, to think that he who commonly dealt in such humanizing precepts as these, pertaining as they do to individual development and self-regenerating discipline, was still concocting an ecclesiastical power, like any sectarian horn of that apocalyptic monster which, for "a time, times and a half," has ravaged Christendom! But I shall not dismiss this topic with an argument having mostly a negative bearing. I ask the reader to look at the Grecian

nomenclature of the Church, and see what is latently implied by that. If the Church had originated with Jesus, or even with his immediate disciples, who were all Jews by birth and education, would not some literal vestiges of its Hebrew origin have been preserved in its name and ritual designation? Is it likely that the Nazarene, who always spoke Hebrew, and would not have been understood by Matthew and most of his disciples if he had been either learned or pedantic enough to talk Greek to them — is it likely, I say, that he who knew so little of letters that he wrote nothing, would have gone away from his mother tongue to hunt up names for his ordinances? Is there any evidence that he ever delivered one precept, or uttered a single word, in Greek? How happens it then that the Church was first called *Ecclesia*, its earliest epithets *Christianos* and *Catholicos*, and that the primitive name of every ordinance and office in the Church was *Grecian?* as, *Baptizma*, *Eucharistia*, *Diaconos*, *Presbuteros*, *Episcopos*, and even *Apostolos*. I will tell you why: It was because the primitive Church was a Grecian body, whose head was where "*the disciples were first*

called Christians — in Antioch," as we are told in the Book of Acts; where "the hand of the Lord was with them," as those Church-builders presumed, to such an extent that the inhabitants anon changed the name of their city to *Theopolis — the Divine City.*

Here, reader, is a clue to Church Authority which you may follow out at your leisure. Apply it to the magnified "Apostolic Succession," and you will find *that* chain a Hebrew link too short. The first *Apostle* heard a voice in Greek: a language which Jesus never spoke. As surely as the first *Quaker* was an Englishman, or as the doctrine of *Transubstantiation* was born at Rome and cradled in Latin, so positively do the literal christenings of ecclesiastical appurtenances denote the Grecian parentage and nurture of the Church. Jesus was not even her god-father.

SECTION III.

Jesus did not inculcate the Christian Faith.

In the preceding chapter, after elaborating the legitimate signification of the word *Messiah*, I said it has had other and later applications to which I should have occasion to advert thereafter. That occasion is reached at length; for I alluded to the modern ecclesiastical Christ. The worshipers of this deity have enacted not only that Jesus was the Messiah of Jewish expectation, but that in a sense entirely distinct from what the Jews have ever understood.

The Christ of the Church is a two-fold personage, as vaguely implied in the doctrine of Divine Incarnation. "In the beginning was the Word," says John, "and the Word was with God, and *the Word was God.* And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and *we beheld his glory*, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." John the Baptist, heralding Jesus, said, "Behold *the Lamb* of God, which taketh away the sin of the World! *No man hath seen God* at any

time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. This is *the Son* of God." And these mysterial declarations and plain contradictions were written, adds the evangelist, "that ye might believe that *Jesus is the Christ*, the Son of God."

Here is a strange jumble of fancies, which Jesus never assorted, nor attempted to explain, according to all that is at present known of his teachings; though he seems to have hinted at something of the kind, in saying that "no man hath ascended into Heaven but he that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven;" that "God so loved the World that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" and that "the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and *to give his life a ransom for many.*" But these allusions are so mystified, and so remote from any manifest purpose, as to explain nothing, and suggest only a doubt of their genuineness. Why should Jesus contradict the Holy Ghost, by whom (according to the doctrine of Bible Inspiration) it is elsewhere said

that "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into Heaven"? That he discredited the *terms* of this history, is not unlikely; but that he believed in the general resurrection of the dead, is as probable as the conclusion of his argument with the Sadducees, that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob "is not the God of the dead, but of the living." That the rising of every soul, too, is immediately after one's exit from the body, is expressively signified by the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, as well as demonstrated by the spiritual manifestation of Moses and Elijah to Jesus, in company with Peter, James and John. It is highly improbable, therefore, that Jesus ever uttered what is so contradictory of himself, as the saying that "no man hath ascended into Heaven," but only "*the Son of Man*," unless this phrase is less exclusive in its original sense, and the whole text is susceptible of a more rational interpretation than Christians have conceived: a question which I purpose to answer in the concluding part of this treatise.

I might say the like of the two texts following that commented on, as well as of some other unreasonable

reports about the famous son of Joseph and Mary, all growing out of a vain attempt to identify a man with the apparition of a god. It is impossible to elicit from the four evangelists any consistent theory of the supernatural Christ. They say not enough to make themselves intelligible, while many of their declarations are so contradictory as often to turn doubt into confusion. Why it was expedient that John should be the forerunner of Jesus, they do not explain; nor how the character of each is established in the testimony of the other, notwithstanding the mutual rejection of such testimony: for Jesus never professed what John affirmed of him; and though he told his disciples that John was Elias, the latter told special messengers of the Jews that he was not. These discrepancies are among the greatest mysteries of revealed religion, if made to consist with implicit faith in the Divine authenticity of the scriptures; but when we admit the historical facts touching their origin, we are no longer bound to accept an absurd proposition merely because it has been put into the mouth of Jesus by men who reverenced so little what

they called the Word of God, as actually to burn more of it than they compiled for our use.

The doctrine so obscurely hinted at by the four evangelists, has been more fully developed since their time. The Christian theology is very explicitly stated in books of later date, and the presumed Gospel of Jesus has become so hackneyed by preaching, that many think it a shame not to be able to accept it in these terms:—

1. All mankind lost the favor of God, and were condemned to endless misery, on the day that our first parents ate "the forbidden fruit."

2. God the Father was not without some desire to pardon the unlucky race, most of whom were thus condemned before they were born; but that he could not do without some consideration on account of his inflexible *Justice.*

3. Thereupon God the Son undertook the part of a Mediator, for the purpose of reconciling God the Father to his own human offspring.

4. And these were the terms of reconciliation according to which God the Father consented to pardon

mankind, and admit them again to his benignant presence:—

(1.) That the Eternal Son should assume a form of human nature, some time in the age of Humanity, and offer that body in sacrifice as an atonement for the sinfulness of mankind.

(2.) That the Holy Ghost should regenerate all such as by the Father's special grace should at any time be moved to believe in this "plan of redemption."

5. Such was the scheme of human salvation, as devised by the Divine Trinity, almost in the beginning of this World; and the same was announced to the righteous patriarchs and prophets, as well as prefigured by all the Jewish sacrifices, especially that of the paschal lamb, from Abraham to the advent of Messiah.

6. Finally, all this was fulfilled in the person of Jesus, in whom the Eternal Son took the form of man by means of the supernatural conception of Mary, and offered the same on the Cross of Calvary, as the one great Atonement for all and forever. Now it only remains for us to believe and be saved; for faith in this mystery is "the substance of things hoped

for," since the Holy Ghost is ready to regenerate only the simple believers.

Now, if we would find a clear scriptural expression of the Christian Faith here set forth, we must pass over the writings of all the immediate disciples of Jesus, and consult only those of Paul. This man, whose apostleship was quite "out of due time;" who never saw the natural face nor heard the living voice of Jesus, yet acknowledged no earthly testimony about the Gospel, and even boasted that he received no instructions from the older apostles; who, in fact, was one of their maddest persecutors for some time previous to his own miraculous conversion, and saw none of them for three years after that event, though he went immediately to "preaching Christ in the synagogues, that he was the Son of God, and confounded the Jews at Damascus, proving that Jesus is the very Christ;"— Paul, who about this time met with Peter, "and abode with him fifteen days, but other apostles saw none save James, the Lord's brother," and afterwards, going into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, "was unknown by face to the churches of Judea," till "fourteen years after," when he went

again to Jerusalem, not to learn, so much as "to communicate unto them that Gospel which he preached among the Gentiles;" who then and there met some opponents among the brethren, "to whom he gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour," and who distinguished himself from all other members of that apostolic council, by saying of them, that though "they seemed to be somewhat in conference, they added nothing" to him; — that Paul who on a later occasion "withstood Peter to the face, because," in his own words, "he was to be blamed," as well as "other Jews who dissembled and walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the Gospel," as *he* understood it; who was so confident in his own opinion, and so intolerant of all differences of belief, as to write to the Galatians that if any man, or even an angel from Heaven, should preach to them any other gospel than what he had preached, he ought to be accursed: — this very self-sufficient Paul will tell you more about the Christian Faith in a single paragraph, and in almost every page of his lively epistles, than all that the real disciples of Jesus, who hung upon his living voice, seem thus to have learned. Paul, indeed, is

the only biblical writer that inculcates the whole creed which the Church puts for the Gospel of Jesus. He is the only strictly theological writer within the lids of our Revelation: that is, no other scriptures bear the marks of originality and completeness of conception in their author, such as are stampt upon all the epistles of Paul. He is the largest and by far the most powerful and persuasive writer in the New Testament; and whatever may be thought of the convictions and communicative attempts of the other apostles, he is the only one who has furnished us with a consistent and thorough expression, not to say plausible explication, of the subsequently received Christian System. This is a strikingly significant fact, implying that we ought to inquire more thoroughly than believers have generally done after the origin of ecclesiastical Christism — that religion of Paul which all Christendom after the apostle have mistaken for the Gospel of Jesus. This I reserve as one of the principal topics of the next chapter, eking the compass of the present argument no further than to show that Paul, who learned nothing from the living Nazarene, and would not be taught by any of his disciples, yet did not derive his doctrine from

the posthumous teaching of Jesus, by the natural methods of Spirit-communication.

On this point I am willing to accept the word of Paul himself, so far as it is consistent with the exercise of my own Reason. I admit that he was an honest man, and only refuse to put his religious judgment in place of my own. He tells us that he was taught the Christism which he preached "by the revelation of Jesus;" but I prefer to hear him state the facts on which he grounds this inference. In the account of his conversion, as given in the 22d chapter of Acts, he offers no other evidence of the Spirit-presence of Jesus, than the sudden appearance of an extraordinary light, and the testimony of an unknown voice heard only by himself. The phenomenon itself is accountable: but if Saul was rationally convicted of error by such means; if, by a method so irrelevant as an outward light quickly terminating in the darkness of physical blindness, he was intellectually and heartfully converted — convinced of the truth, and imbued with a love of that Gospel which he had conscientiously devoted to destruction: *that* is the miracle in the case. I can more easily believe that Jesus was

there, so opportunely to put out the eyes of a man so religiously unseeing as Saul of Tarsus, and thus to prevent the execution of his wicked purposes, than that the same bigot should be transformed all at once into a faithful and competent minister of righteousness, as is related of him.

Luke gives three narrations of this event, two of which purport rehearsals of the same Saul who thus became Paul: but the credit of each of these accounts is much impaired by their relative disagreement. One represents that "the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man." In another, Paul himself says, "They that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake unto me." Then, in his speech before Agrippa, he declares that they "were all fallen to the earth," ere the voice was heard. Here also he professes to have received the whole communication of Jesus directly from his spiritual lips: whereas, according to each of the other recitals, it was conveyed mostly through the mediumship of one Ananias. Moreover, there is much diversity of statement as to the matter of this revelation,

as well as in specifying its source. By one account "Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, *the Lord, even Jesus*, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost." By another, "*The God of our fathers hath chosen thee*, that thou shouldst know his will, and see the Just One, and shouldst hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." This, it seems, was the matter of revelation — the lesson for Paul — the end for which the unknown voice directed him to "go into the city, and it should be told him what he must do." Finally, adding the otherwise alleged declaration of the strange visitant, admitting it to be Jesus himself, if you please, saying to Paul, "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee, delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles,

unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me;" and connecting the three accounts of this wonderful Spirit-communication, what does it all amount to, as a method of indoctrinating the famed apostle to the Gentiles with either the Gospel of Jesus or his own later "mystery of godliness"?

A proper attention to the terms in which Paul maintains the authority of his ministry is fitted to induce the opinion that he did not profess to have received his apostleship solely from Jesus, but rather from the Father, with the sanction only of the Son. The form of his epistolary greeting was often in these words: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, *by the will of God.*" In his first epistle to the Corinthians it reads, "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, *through the will of God.*" In writing to the Galatians, he styles himself, "Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ *and* God the Father, who raised him from the dead)."

In his first letter to Timothy he claims to be "an apostle of Jesus Christ, *by the commandment of God our Savior*, and Lord Jesus Christ our hope." To the Romans he writes, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, *called to be an apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God* (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures), concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." To Titus he multiplies the terms of his profession thus: "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the World began; but hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me, *according to the commandment of God our Savior*." Furthermore, he wrote to the Corinthians that "all things are of God, who hath given to us the word of reconciliation;" and to the Galatians that "when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb" — the synagogue of Moses, "and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles, immediately I

conferred not with flesh and blood; neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus." All these terms of his apostleship agree with those of his first calling through the mediumship of Ananias, as rehearsed by himself—"*The God of our fathers hath chosen thee.*" And that Paul did not mean to confound *his* Christ with the more ancestral Deity, is evident from his writing to the Corinthians, that "to us *there is but one God the Father*, by whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."

Again, a thorough canvass of all the statements of Paul touching the source of his religion, does not tend to establish, but rather to refute, the notion that it was the result of any communication from the Heaven-ascended Jesus. He speaks of other "revelations" subsequent to the event of his conversion, but does not say that any of them were fitted to enlarge or elucidate his theory of salvation. In his second epistle to the Corinthians he speaks of being "caught up to the third heavens," where he "heard

unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for man to utter." Of course this could have been no part of his doctrine — the Christism of his preaching, concerning which he "shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God." In fact, the various spirit visitations and revelations with which he professed to have been favored, seem only to have given him a new argument for "the resurrection of the dead," in a sense harmonious with his former views, and changed his understanding of the ancient scriptures. As much as this is deducible from his ingenuous confession to Felix:—

"Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself: because that thou mayst understand, that there are but yet twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city: neither can they prove the things whereof they accuse me. But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so *worship I the God of our fathers*, *be-*

lieving all things which are written in the law and in the prophets."

Following this clew of Paul's testimony, it will be manifest that he derived his Christism from the ancient scriptures, rather than from any readier source of information. In writing to the Corinthians, some twenty years after his conversion, he says: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand: for I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins *according to the scriptures;* and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, *according to the scriptures.*" Then in his self-defence before Agrippa, he says: "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, *saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:* that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles."

Paul's testimony then, as to the source whence he

derived the matter of his faith and preaching, may be summed up in these three propositions:

1. He believed "all things which are written in the law and in the prophets."

2. The Christism which he preached was "according to the scriptures."

3. He believed and preached "*none other things* than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come."

Where then was the need of his receiving any portion of the Christian Faith from the departed Spirit of Jesus? The notion that he *was* so instructed, will not bear the light of Reason. If this method of instruction had been practicable, doubtless it would have been generally employed. But how should they who could not comprehend the earthly voice of Jesus, be able to profit more by his celestial teachings? It is singular enough that the glorified Jesus should select the most violent persecutor of his followers, and make him the sole confidant of his Gospel, leaving the whole Judean fold of his earthly sheep to wander without a Shepherd: for none of the older apostles claim to have been thoroughly instructed by their Master, nor

do they intimate that he was ever seen by any one of them after his spiritual ascension at the end of forty days from the Crucifixion, when he left them querying whether he would at that time "restore again the kingdom to Israel." But it is incredible that the translated Galilean Reformer should make a demonstration of so temporary consequence. Why begin a work which he has never finished? Was Paul the only natural medium of Spirit-communication with mortals from that day to this? If not, why is he the only man that has maintained a credible pretension to being so taught by Jesus? And if Paul himself was really docile in this way, and as much in the habit of listening to the spiritual voice of Jesus as has been supposed, why did he not accept the bidding of this Mentor alone — why seek ecclesiastical commendation and the laying on of hands by "certain prophets and teachers at Antioch," as qualifying his ministry? Why, instead of disputing with Barnabas about the case of Mark, did he not refer the cause of a "sharp contention" immediately to Jesus? Why did he so often dispute with Peter, without alluding to any immediate oral instruction from their common Lord?

And when certain men came down from Judea to Antioch, saying, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved," why, "after no small dissension and disputation with them," did Paul and Barnabas "go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question," and there decide it according to the judgment of Peter? Why did not Paul seek at once the spiritual teaching and direction of the heavenly Jesus? There is but one answer to all these pertinent questions; and that is, *Christism is not the Gospel of Jesus:* it did not originate with his teachings, either in the earthly or the heavenly sphere.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTIANITY A TEMPLE OF PRIESTCRAFT.

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." MATTHEW VII. 15.

IF Jesus was not the author of Christianity, then it must be a human invention. It cannot be of Divine origin in any sense; because, according to the supposed teachings of the Holy Ghost — the substratum of Christian theosophy — it has been unqualifiedly imputed to the Son of Mary, which imputation is found to be false. Who can charge God with thus acceding to falsehood? If any, it is only because, in the fortuitous liabilities of their faith, they too much resemble those Ephesian disciples of Apollos, who, though practising the religion of John the Baptist, "had not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost," till Paul happened among them with

his gospel. It is pitiful to reflect how often, since the days and after the example of those easy converts, human sense and manly judgment have caved in to the mere word of an unreasonable authority, and how many sincere persons, in the last eighteen hundred years, have been baptized into a doctrine of which they can give no rational account.

The notorious superfluity of evil of which this sacerdotal invention has been productive, is sufficient, when duly considered, to convince any unprejudiced mind that it must have originated in error. Go read the history of the Church, and then deny if you can that it has been animated by a spirit even more malignant than that of Saul of Tarsus. Review the Bible, explain away its contradictions and absurd statements, reconcile certain scriptural implications of the Divine Character with what you instinctively cherish touching Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, and say why bad examples are therein held up for our admiration as well as good, and why diverse iniquitous precepts are thereby clothed with the same authority as the best words of Truth and Right. Look also at the influence of this Christian Word of God, as often used to

cover wrong and sanction crime as to prompt men to ways of Virtue. Finally, examine the Christian Faith, and confess how shocking to your head and heart is every form and notion of the Atonement — how it hurts your conception of propriety and your love of Right, to think the guilty are to be happy because a perfect innocent has suffered. Consider too how few of the great mass of believers in this supernatural method of salvation have been induced thereby to amend their lives. Many Christians think the inhabitants of Christendom are no better to-day than when Paul began to preach at Damascus. It is difficult to discern wherein his religion has made people better. History justifies the remark, that persecution has been more rampant, and priestcraft more arrogant and supercilious, among Christians than pagans. Avarice and monopoly, war, subjugation and tyranny of every sort, have oftener characterized the worshipers of the Cross than other idolaters of all climes and ages. And what is the natural and logical inference from all these facts? Why, inasmuch as every tree is known by its own fruit, Christianity, thus productive of evil, must have had an evil origin. It is a

contrivance not merely of men, but mainly of erring and evil-minded men. This position I proceed to substantiate by deductions from reliable history.

SECTION I.

Paul the Inventor of Christism.

We learn from the Book of Acts, that in the beginning of the apostolic age there were "about a hundred and twenty" disciples of the departed Jesus, to whom pertained no ecclesiastical organization, no written expression of their peculiar faith, and no place of public worship except the common synagogues and the ancient temple of the Jews. Of the Mosaic religion they were becoming skeptical, more than indifferent to its influence. They had been told that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship *him* must worship *in* spirit and in Truth;" but they did not immediately outgrow the bias of their earlier education, and do not seem to have imbibed any impression of its being sinful to conform to the sacred customs of their

fathers, so far as these were agreeable to their unconscious prejudice. Accordingly we find them, fifty days after the death of their Lord, gathering together at Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Weeks: in which act they were forestalled by the Holy Ghost, who then and there introduced himself to the World: for though Peter says that "holy men of yore spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," it is to be observed that the old prophets make no mention of such a personage; and John declares that before a certain time "the Holy Ghost was not given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." Moreover, Luke relates the first earthly manifestation of this modern deity to have been on this wise:

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling

at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now, when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine."

But Peter, having obtained audience, told the people that his brethren were not intoxicated, and they ought to know better than to think so, seeing it was but the third hour of the day. He assured the gaping spectators that the seeming farce was fraught with serious importance, and bade them regard it as the fulfilment of this ancient prediction of Joel: —

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be

turned to darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come."

Peter further argues from certain writings of David, that Jesus, who had been crucified fifty days before, had also been raised from the dead and exalted to heaven by the right hand of God; "and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost," adds this upstart theologian, "he hath shed forth this which ye see and hear."

Such, like enough, was the honest opinion of Peter, as to the cause and purport of the strange phenomenon before their eyes; and why should it be taken for anything more? He adduces no authority for his explication, and speaks with an air of self-persuasion — as a man who utters his own thought. He does not say that his language is prompted by the present supervening Holy Ghost; he does not even ask the living tongues of prophecy to second his own interpretation of the dead prophet. Doubtless that unique instance of Spirit-manifestation was as unlucky for test-seekers as any that happen now-a-days. Peter's voice seems to have been not only more

persuasive, but greatly more intelligible, than that of the polyglot spirit; for the Galileans speaking in other tongues excited only amazement; whereas, at the natural speech of Peter nobody was confounded, but many "gladly received his word and were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." Luke subjoins that the same "continued steadfastly in *the apostles' doctrine* and fellowship;" thus disclaiming all pretension to a spiritual derivation of their novel Christism.

But let us criticise this preaching of Peter, and see what it amounts to. In his first sermon to the Jews, having concluded "that God hath made that same Jesus whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ," and many asking, "What shall we do? Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Afterwards he preached in the temple, declaring that the crucifixion of Jesus was a fulfilment of prophecy, and exhorting the people to "repent therefore, and be converted, that your sins

may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, and he shall send Jesus Christ which before was preached unto you; whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."

From these and other scriptures of Luke it appears that Peter and his colleagues were fully committed to the belief that Jesus had become, in some occult way, the Christ and Savior of men; that remission of sins and the vague gift of the Holy Ghost were to be obtained only through him; that "there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved;" and this bald assertion he keeps repeating, with various terms of positiveness, and with much endeavor to back it up by the old scriptures, which nobody before had imagined to have such a drift, but without any attempt to explain in what theoretic sense this Christism is to be understood. The same is true of all the primitive apostles till after the ministry of Paul. Their preaching was full of faith, but there was no

philosophy in it; and their doctrine, for some ten or twelve years after the so-called descent of the Holy Ghost, was neither systematized nor named.

Paul is the only biblical *teacher* of the Christian religion. He first reduced Christism to its ecclesiastical form, and gave it a consistent theoretic expression. The older apostles *preached* it dogmatically to the affections of men; but Paul spoke to the reasoning faculties, and made his system of salvation understood. He gave the rationale of atonement, both for Jew and Gentile, and revealed the symbolical relation between the Hebrew altar and the Catholic Cross. He was the first to say that the covenant of Jehovah with Abraham was only of a spiritual import, and that the whole history of the Israelites is an allegory; that Isaac was a type of the ecclesiastical Christ, and that all "who are of faith are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise;" that the Mosaic ritual was a divinely constituted system of types and "shadows of good things to come;" that "he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter;" that the paschal lamb, and all the carnal offerings of

the Jewish priesthood, were typical of Jesus on the Cross, and that this Son of God, having made a sin-offering of his own body in Man's behalf, to complete the signification of the sacrificial law, thence ascended into the Spiritual Holy of Holies, to become "a High Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec — a minister of the upper sanctuary, and true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not Man." Paul conceived and set forth this admirable scheme of salvation — admirable because so elaborate and sublime, though essentially false and hateful; and out of his writings neither this nor any other exegesis of the apostolic gospel, is to be found in the Bible.

Paul speaks of this "gospel" as being newly developed in his day. He calls it "the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to the saints." He thinks it old only in essence, as is understood of all philosophic Truth, "which from the beginning of the World hath been hid in God." He tells us also how this "mystery of godliness" came to be unfolded in his own mind. In his epistle to the Galatians he says, "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was

preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." This text has led many to suppose that Paul professed to have received express instructions from Jesus touching his apostleship, by some abnormal communication. But he does not say so here; and if we consider other declarations of his pen, we shall find that he did not mean to be so understood. In writing to the Ephesians he said, "Ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; as I wrote afore in few words, whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets *by his Spirit.*" Here Paul makes the Holy Ghost his teacher instead of Jesus; and in writing to the Corinthians he puts this divine revelation in terms still less mysterious: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," he writes: "but *God hath*

revealed them to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given us of God. Which things we speak, not in words, which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, *comparing* spiritual things with spiritual." It is evident from this last quotation that Paul professed not to be a mere recipient of information as to the truth of what he taught, but to have received within himself the power of discerning spiritual realities. If in this claim he included anything more than such mental illumination and divine impulsion as naturally follows a pretty large development of the intellectual and moral faculties, he must have been beside himself; unless we suppose him to have been unwittingly susceptible to impression by spirits of higher spheres; for this is all that can be rationally understood of Inspiration.

But Paul elsewhere intimates that this Holy Ghost may have an earthly body — that the Logos of heavenly Wisdom may become a human word, or a Word of God to human understanding. Nothing short of this is implied in the following instructions to Timothy: —

"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Here then we have in fanciful conception a reservoir of Truth — an earthly fountain of Revelation, equal to all human needs. That this was the source from which Paul seemingly drew all his sacred learning, is sufficiently indicated by his method of communicating it to others. Luke relates that on first going to Thessalonica, "where was a synagogue of the Jews, Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath-days reasoned with them *out of the*

scriptures; opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen from the dead; and *that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.*" Apollos too, who followed Paul, watering where he had planted, "mightily convinced the Jews, *showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.*" But Paul's whole epistles are the fullest evidence of what I am saying; for they abound in references to the old scriptures, and I am not aware that they contain one expression of Divine Authority, or one precept of the Holy Ghost, which is not presumed by the writer to be sanctioned and even comprised by "the law and the prophets." See, at the close of his epistle to the Romans, how he extols "the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and *by the scriptures of the prophets*, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith."

But, if Paul derived the Christian Faith from the Jewish scriptures, why does he call it *his* gospel? as in writing to the Thessalonians, "*Our gospel* came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in

the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance;" again, "We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved in the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, whereunto he called you by *our gospel;*" to the Corinthians, "But if *our gospel* be hid, it is hid to them that are lost;" to the Romans, "Now to him that is of power to establish you according to *my gospel;*" and to Timothy, "Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to *my gospel.*" Some will infer the answer from a single clause in context with these quotations; as, "The glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust," "the gospel which I preached unto you," "whereof I am made a minister," or the like. But this reply is hardly consistent with the apostolic precedence which Paul often assumed. In writing to the Corinthians, he says of himself and other apostles, "We are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry; ye are God's building;" but he further says, "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, *as a wise master-builder, I*

have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon." His self-confidence is remarkable when he exhorts Timothy to "hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard from *me*," as well as when he commands him, saying, "Do thy diligence to come shortly to *me;* for Demas hath forsaken *me;* having loved this present world, and is departed to Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with *me*. Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for *he is profitable to* ME for the ministry." This self-sufficiency and possessive case of Paul is best sustained, as I think, by the conscious labor with which he deduced Christism from Judaism — by his arduous research in finding it where it had been "hid for ages:" for, if his gospel was *plainly* according to the writings of Moses and the prophets, being therein *literally* revealed, how could it have been unknown to the Jews, who constantly read those scriptures for thousands of years before the apostolic age? Why did Paul, "a Pharisee and son of a Pharisee," who was "brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers;" why did this most zealous and learned Jew

remain for so many years ignorant of what he so clearly saw in his conversion, if the Jewish scriptures were not better fitted to hide than reveal his own doctrine? The truth is, Paul never found Christism in the old scriptures till he had found, in the recesses of his own brain, a new method of interpreting them. He first became persuaded that the letter of the law was ineffective, and that some of the most important prophecies had literally failed; and then it was easier to think the scriptures meant more than had been understood of them, than to discard prejudice, and throw away at once their religious support. This was the juncture of Paul's conversion. Having never been fortunate enough to meet Jesus in his life-time, yet forming a hasty opinion against him as a religious innovator, and being afterwards further induced by his social position and active temperament to offer himself a champion for exterminating the surviving heresy of the Nazarene, Paul, who was naturally conscientious, and verily wished "to do God service," must have had many conflicts of mind during his acts of persecution. Doubtless the result was nothing less than what Luke has represented; though I think we

should follow Paul's method of interpreting scripture, and understand the "great light" of his conversion as importing *the allegorical sense* of the law and the prophets, which, being suddenly and forcibly suggested, suffusing his mind and overwhelming his own thought, seemed like the revelation from Heaven of a new religion, causing the scales of his old belief to fall from the eyes of his enlightened Soul. It is this spiritual import — this allegorical sense of the scriptures, which constitutes the true Word of God, as Paul discovered and was the first to tell the Jews and Gentiles: and this is the source of Paul's religion, the beginning of our Christianity.

I shall not undertake to say that Paul developed the externals of the Christian religion, as they have appeared since his day, or that he advocated all the ecclesiastical ordinances of later times, either as the elements or means of salvation. His doctrine was essentially spiritual, and is in itself a total abnegation of all human priesthoods, of all visible forms of worship, and of every church of earthly name, except that in which, "Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone," all true believers "are builded

together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." For if the law and the prophets are allegorical, then must the Mosaic religion be typical throughout, and the Jewish Synagogue is symbolical only of "the Spirits of Just men made perfect" in Heaven. And this very doctrine Paul labored well to establish. To the Galatians he writes, that "the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons; the one by a bond-maid, the other by a free-woman. But he who was of the bond-woman was born after the flesh, but he of the free-woman was by promise, which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was,

are the children of promise. We are not the children of the bond-woman, but of the free. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." "And you," he also says to the Colossians, "being dead in your sins, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all your trespasses; *blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances* that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy-day, or of the new-moon, or of the Sabbath-days; which are a shadow of things to come: but the body is of Christ. Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ, from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, after the commandments and doctrines of men? If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

In this rejection of outward "will-worship" and "voluntary humility," Paul agreed with Jesus: though in making salvation dependent primarily on

the virtue of an arbitrary atonement, and secondarily on faith in this mystery, he frustrated the only possible condition of that intrinsic, heart-born worship which Jesus taught rather as the effect of salvation than its cause: for how is it possible to "worship the Father *in spirit*," without some conception of *the* TRUTH *of his original grace?*

Notwithstanding the spiritual drift of Paul's teachings, it cannot be denied that he was instrumental in establishing such a Church as he was never blind enough to have mistaken for the antitype of Judaism. Perhaps I ought to say rather that he was never *wise* enough to conceive how much below his own ideal of religious truth the correspondential figure of that false religion of his fathers must fall. I do not believe he was *vile* enough to labor wittingly for such ugly developments of his faith, as later centuries have stumbled on. Yet he seems to have had some presentiment of these sad fruits, even in the midst of his very successful endeavors. His letters to the numerous bodies of believers through his preaching, are interspersed with admonitions against the "heresies," "vain janglings," and "perverse disputings of men

of corrupt minds," even among themselves. He accomplished more than all the real disciples of Jesus, both in developing and propagating the Christian Faith; yet, in retrospecting the field of his ministry, his "boasting in the regions of Achaia" is hardly an offset to the frequent reflection of having bestowed upon it "labor in vain." He seems to have foreseen that, through the influence of the unruly and unstable of his own converts, many in later times would "give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy, and having their consciences seared with a hot iron." He was impressed to tell his Ephesian brethren that after his departing "grievous wolves should enter in among them, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things." He spoke prophetically, too, of "the Man of Sin," as about to be revealed through "the mystery of iniquity" already at work; "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." And is it not singular, that these very pointed predictions have been exactly fulfilled by

the Church? — the only conservatory of Paul's religion.

Paul's religious system, as a mere theory, was harmless; but in the social application which he made of it, it was productive of incalculable evil. Had he been content with writing out his new method of interpreting the scriptures of Moses, for the perusal only of thoughtful men, it might have had a wholesome tendency to rationalize the Jews; or had he more correctly estimated the virtue of mere preaching to the populace, and so allowed more time for converting the world, after-times might never have realized the episcopal consequences of his taking example, in authorizing Timothy to "commit his teachings to faithful men, who should be able to teach others also." The sequel proves that this was a dangerous experiment; for out of it has come the Catholic Hierarchy, "after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness." It is unaccountable how Paul was induced to trust so much to human honesty in general, in view of the fact that in his own day there were "deceitful workers, transforming

themselves into the apostles of Christ;" considering, too, his avowed opinion that "evil men and seducers" were likely to multiply, "waxing worse and worse." But further inquiry here would be irrelevant to the proper thesis and conclusion of this lengthy section, in which I only meant to show that Paul invented our ecclesiastical Christism, including the notion of a Spiritual Church and Spiritual Word of God. What use was afterwards made of these misconceits, must be our next inquiry.

SECTION II.

Constantine the Father of Ecclesiastical Authority.

To such as are acquainted with the substance of general history, in and about the apostolic age, it must be evident that many external circumstances, as well as internal principles, conspired to spread Christianity, besides a simple faith in "the mystery of godliness," and a zeal for human salvation. Among all the doctors of divinity in Christendom, there has been no equal of Paul, in Platonic attachment to the so-called

gospel of his discovery, nor in self-abandonment to its propagation. That his labors were taken up where he left them, and nominally prosecuted to the same purpose, yet with far different results from what he designed, there is no room for doubt. By what agencies this happened, let us now inquire.

The progress of Christianity, or the time of building this Temple of Priestcraft, is distinguishable into four periods, marked by the several stages of its ingratiating the civil power. Till about the middle of the third century, *Christians were generally persecuted;* then for about another century, *they were barely tolerated;* thence to the end of the fifth century, *their cause was largely vindicated;* and finally, Kingcraft in the height of its own ambition having covenanted with Priestcraft, *Christianity became the only authorized religion* in the whole empire of Rome.

In the first of these periods, Persecution and Martyrdom were the sole keepers of the Christian Faith. But these were all-sufficient for the work here assigned them. Without their influence Christism might have descended to us only as a piece of

Hebrew philosophy. They fanned the sacred flame in its first kindlings from a spark, and fed it with zeal when there was no other incitement for its fuel. Persecution made Paul thrice the man he would otherwise have been: a more earnest, active and persevering missionary of his own excogitated gospel. It sharpened his wits, emboldened his tongue, and greatened all his powers of mind. It broke the heart-strings of his national prejudice, and sent him out a weaned Jew and an unfaltering apostle to the Gentiles. This enlarged the sphere of his personal influence, whereby he made numerous converts, who as living epistles diffused his teachings far and wide through successive generations; and these again and again were fired with zeal for the same cause, and were made willing to lay down their lives in defence of a thought made precious by that stirring spirit of Persecution which tries men's souls. Nor can we wonder that many in those troublous times "counted not their lives dear unto them, so they might finish their course with joy;" or that some saints, like Ignatius, the canonized bishop of Antioch, were "bent on Martyrdom." "To die is gain," said Paul; and the senti-

ment was true in more than one sense. Liberty is sweeter than *this* life, and there is no slavery so hateful as that of Conscience. Then, "to depart and be with Christ," has been often esteemed "far better" than human favor and earthly fortune. The story of Young Cyril illustrates the case of multitudes who, on first hearing the tidings of Immortality and Heaven, have been fascinated with a dream of "mansions in the skies." So there appears to have been not only a malicious purpose to destroy all the worshipers of the Cross, but also an abundant willingness to suffer and die in its behalf. Yet, however various and ominous the incentives to extermination and self-sacrifice, all conspired in resilient effect to the very reverse of human expectation. "The blood of the martyrs was the essential seed of the Church." Believers were confirmed and multiplied by opposition; every votary as well as victim of Martyrdom became a tutelary saint; the Cross gained credit through the fortitude of its suffering adherents; and the Church, like the young founder of Rome, was nourished in her infancy by the very wolf that went to devour her.

The spirit of Persecution was prompted by religion.

So long as the people cherished the pagan gods, their worship was established by law. Christians not only broached a new deity, but denounced the old idolatries; and rulers who were not atheists must have deemed them the most heinous of all criminals. Accordingly they suffered the mere statutory interpretation of Justice as qualified by the religious character of the State, which was generally administered without malice.

Whenever the throne happened to be occupied by an irreligious sovereign, the Christians were let alone. This was the case during the reign of Caracalla, "monster of iniquity in almost every species of vice," though Christian writers have called him; of Heliogabalus, who is said to have "lived more like a beast than a man, and was slain by his soldiers in the midst of his follies;" of Alexander who, though his religion was pagan, "incorporated something Christian in it;" and of Philip the Arabian, called the first Christian emperor, of whom an orthodox historian remarks, that he "was never baptized, and it would have been a pity he should, when we consider his life and principles." For the space of forty years, from the first to the last

of these and other intervening emperors, the compiler of church-history above-quoted* asserts "that Christianity was, in a measure, unnoticed by the State; at least, the monarchs were distinguished by such propensities as rendered them either indifferent or favorable to the Church." The immediate tendency and lasting effect of this respite were, to tranquilize the distracted votaries of the new faith, and secularize their religion. "Conformity to the world and love of gain sadly disgraced the professors of Christianity. They mingled with the heathen in marriage, and imitated them in their dress, luxuries, and recreations. The rulers of the Church too, not only beheld these things with indifference, but partook of the contagion, or, what is worse, perhaps set the example. They hunted for preferment, and neglected their charge by becoming non-residents. They even embarked in worldly business, and traveled through distant provinces in pursuit of the mammon of unrighteousness." So reflected our clerical authority, whose language,

*Sabine, pastor of a Boston Congregational Church, who wrote an epitome of ecclesiastical history in 1820, from which most of the citations in this and the following sections are made.

being interpreted, means only that the early Christians grew very skeptical as soon as they had time to think; and, without the Decian Persecution which immediately followed, "the mystery of godliness" might have been lost sight of in the middle of the third century. In ten years, under the cruel discipline of Decius, Gallus and Valerian, the Christian cause gained more than it had lost in the previous lapse of its forty years' rest. But here begins the reign of Gallienus, under whose sceptre the period of toleration is renewed, wherein the Church cultivates a worldly policy, making various compromises with the older superstitions, "heresies have time to grow and strengthen, and contentions ripen into divisions." Then flourished the Wonder-worker, Gregory Thaumaturgus, a pagan disciple of Origen, who became bishop of Neocesarea, and is said to have converted nearly that whole city from idolatry. Besides his pretending to work miracles, it is admitted that his religious "views were exceedingly accommodating. The heathen were particularly attached to their idolatrous festivals in honor of their heroes, at which their pastimes and pleasures were excessive. Gregory therefore invented Christian

festivals in commemoration of the martyrs, in which solemnities he suffered the people to indulge in excesses similar to those practised by the pagans. This removed the objections of many, and Christianity, if it deserved the name, presently preponderated. Churches were erected, and the pagan temples were deserted; but, alas!" adds the reviewer from whom I quote at large, "the power of godliness was wanting, and the form of it was so corrupt, that the external ordinances of the gospel could scarcely be recognized." Now Thaumaturgus was not more corrupt than the whole ecclesiastical body that tolerated his doings. It was in the very spirit and policy of this wonder-worker that the Christian clergy made advances to the civil power and commended their cause to its keeping.

Near the beginning of the fourth century, the episcopal confederacy having by its various subtle agencies made many inroads upon paganism, and presenting in itself a more promising subserviency to monarchical ambition, Constantine, who had just succeeded to the whole Roman empire, and gained a footing of power in which there was "none to contend with in the exercise of his own will," deter-

mined to abolish at once all the ancient religions of the civilized World, and set up everywhere the worship of Christ: and this decision he immediately carried into effect. "The pagan temples were pulled down, or converted into Christian churches; the exercise of the old priesthood was proscribed, and the idols destroyed; large and elegant structures for Christian worship were raised, and those already erected enlarged and beautified; the episcopacy was increased, and honored with great favors, and enriched with vast endowments; the ritual received many additions; the habiliments of the clergy were pompous, and the whole of the Christian service at once exhibited a scene of worldly grandeur and external parade. What a mighty change! But a short time since, and Christianity was held in sovereign contempt; now she is a favorite at Court, and the companion of princes." Heretofore fire and sword have been employed to punish the worshipers of Jesus: hereafter the same weapons shall make even infidels seem to adore him. But what does this import? Why, merely that the Church now has a political head — that Constantine befriends the clergy just so far as their cause can be

identified with his kingcraft — just so far as they become the willing tools of his worldly ambition. Was Jesus mistaken when he said, "Ye cannot serve God *and* Mammon," or was the religion of Constantine's patronage the most barefaced Priestcraft?

We have now entered the period when a hollow profession of faith in Christ was *vindicated* by the arm of State, as a temporary expedient of human policy. Constantine indeed attempted more than this, but without accomplishing all his aim. He had put down all rule and authority *out* of the Church, except his own; but he had made no provision against internal dissension and schism. Formerly Christians were united by sympathy as common sufferers, and by a sense of common danger; at times, the terrors of persecution had been sufficient to prevent all idle bickerings with each other; but now, released from all annoyance of outward foes, they began to study personal predilections, to discuss doctrinal authorities, and to adjust ritual proprieties. Now comes the reign of discord. Athanasius strives for supremacy, Arius for toleration. A synod of bishops assembles, Arianism is "condemned, and Arius, with several of his

adherents, expelled the Church. These things threw the Christian world into a state of great confusion. Both parties were by far too much influenced by the spirit of pride, and many things to the disgrace of both were shamefully practised, so that paganism began to exult, saying, 'Aha! so would we have it.' These ecclesiastical disputes running high, awakened the most serious attention of Constantine. He wrote conciliatory letters both to Alexander and to Arius, in which he gave no opinion on the subject of debate, but urged mutual forbearance and forgiveness; but things were too obstinate to be thus settled. The emperor therefore resolved upon the call of the whole Church, and accordingly the bishops from all parts of the Christian world were assembled at Nice in Bithynia. At this famous council, Constantine presided in person, and acted as moderator. In the controversy *the Arians contended for the use of scripture phraseology, without explication or comment*, by which means they would be left to affix to it what sense they thought proper. *To this the Trinitarians objected*, by stating that such a test was no test at all, and thereby matters would be left without a

remedy. The synod concluded by the vote of a very large majority against Arius and his coadjutors; and Hosius of Corduba was appointed to draw up a confession of faith, which is the same in substance as what is called the Nicene Creed. This creed was approved by the emperor, and *he gave orders that all who would not subscribe should be banished.* This heavy penalty fell upon Arius, and upon a few others with him, but the greater part of those tainted with his sentiments, some for sake of peace, and more for sake of their bishoprics, *were induced to subscribe what they actually did not believe.*"

This same stormy council of Nice determined the canon of scripture, that is, compiled the Bible, as I have before related; and Constantine decreed that the same should be accepted as the Word of God. The emperor also created a higher order of episcopal dignitaries, by converting the four sees of Antioch, Alexdria, Rome and Constantinople, into metropolitan bishoprics. The prelates of these soon became patriarchs, and grew more and more assuming and emulous, till one of them donned the triple crown of papal supremacy. This completed the Temple

of Priestcraft; but its dedication was by other agencies.

The vindication of Christianity under Constantine and his successors was only after the counsel of the emperor's own will. There was no union of Church and State beyond the option of the latter; and, if the clergy participated at all in the administration of secular power, it was only by permission or command of the worldly sovereign. The sacerdotal cause was completely mortgaged to the political, during the whole period of its courtly patronage. This was clearly the case during the reign of Constantine, who, after reconsidering the doings of the Nicene Council, suffered the proscribed Arius to return to his episcopal station at Alexandria, and sent his adversary into exile. The subordination of the clergy to princely power is still more striking under the sceptre of Constantius, who often set at naught the suffrages of a church to make room for his favorites, and ordered "a strict Arian uniformity throughout the whole Church." Religious Liberty was on a much better footing while Julian reigned; that worthy prince whom a bigoted priesthood has nicknamed

the Apostate, because "he unhinged Christianity from its civil establishment, raised paganism from its degradation, and placed both upon equal toleration. Being himself a pagan, that system had the influence of his example, though *he enforced nothing by the sword.* He labored hard to raise the dignity of the old priesthood, in point of morality, to what the spirit of Christianity requires in its members. *This, doubtless, he had learned from the New Testament*," adds our orthodox authority. It is pity that few Christian rulers, in those times, seem to have learned half as much, "in point of morality," from the same book. However, this pagan example of political manhood was temporary; for Julian reigned but one year and eight months, being succeeded by Jovian, who reëstablished Christianity, confirmed Athanasius in his see, and disappointed the Arians. But this imperial patronage proves very precarious to parties; for "having just raised the hopes" of the Trinitarian expectants, "God saw fit to take" Jovian also, leaving the empire of faith and bigotry to the sectarian management of "Valentinian and Valens; the former to rule in the West,

the latter in the East. Valentinian was reputed orthodox, and followed the steps of his predecessor. Valens was a man of weak capacity, but a stubborn Arian, and consequently the friend of that party." So it was to the end of imperial power: the priest was parasite to the king; but the time was at hand when this relation should be reversed.

Near the end of the fourth century, on the death of Jovian and accession of Valens and Valentinian, the Roman Empire was resolved into two independent powers, called the Eastern and the Western. Here begins the dissolution of the last universal monarchy. In the course of the following century many barbarous tribes are said to have conspired in a war of conquest against the Western Empire, rending it asunder and dividing it among themselves. This gave rise to some eight or ten distinct sovereignties. "But these convulsions destroyed not Christianity; for by these very means the gospel (?) became more widely extended, and even these very conquerors, barbarous as they were, were prevailed on to embrace the faith; though it is to be feared many of these conversions were but from one superstition to another. An instance of this we

have in the baptism of Clovis, and three thousand of his subjects, which took place A. D. 496, in consequence of a vow made by the monarch, on condition that the God of the Christians would render him victorious over his enemies. Victory was decided in his favor, and he was accordingly baptized at Rheims by Remigius, bishop of that city." This conduct of Clovis exemplifies the principle by which all the barbarous heroes were presently converted to Christianity, and induced to "give their power and strength unto the beast." For "the influence of the clergy over the great body of the people" had already transcended the power of conquerors, and these ministers of superstition had grown corrupt just in proportion as their cause became popular. The bishops, therefore, not being accustomed to do anything in their line without a consideration, were quite prepared, in this opportune juncture, to make merchandise of their spiritual powers, selling grace for dominion. The newly-installed kings, too, with hands dyed in the blood of the conquered, were in eager quest of absolution; so that "the current religion of the day, and the spirit of the contending princes, mutually served each

other. This in no small degree contributed to establish and raise that mysterious hierarchy, which at length grew to such a height, that all the kings of the Earth were laid prostrate before it."

The house of episcopacy was nearly finished in the reign of Constantine, when he "instituted the order of patriarchs, and set them up in the chief cities," as aforesaid; for "these had not long possessed this mark of distinction before they began to quarrel who should be universal and chief. A variety of circumstances had conspired to throw the weight of power into the scale of the Roman see: this was seen with jealousy and envy by the bishop of Constantinople, who thought himself entitled to the same dignity, his city being the seat of imperial authority. This pretension of the Constantinopolitan was maintained by the emperor; and for a while the spirit of rivalry was shamefully supported by the two patriarchs. The bishops of Antioch and Alexandria were both patriarchs, in *order*, the same as Rome and Constantinople, but not the same in power and influence; therefore they fell a prey to the rival sees. The patriarchs, thus established, reserved to themselves

the right of consecrating the bishops of their several departments, and so they had the power of making only such instruments as were fitted to their use. They called councils and presided in them; they received the complaints and appeals of the inferior clergy, and exercised the supreme dominion in the Church." At length the scales of ascendency turned in favor of the Roman Pontiff, and Gregory the Great got himself acknowledged the legitimate successor of St. Peter, and the vicegerent of God for the whole Earth. "The keys of Heaven and Hell he has fastened to his girdle, and purgatory is the prison-house, where he confines disobedient souls till money enough is paid down for their release. The forgiveness of sins must connect with confession made to the priest, and money must be paid for the intercession of departed saints."

And now the ten proselyted kings, with the power of imperial Rome in their hands, have come to surrender it all to "His Holiness," to whom they dedicate this great house of wicked lucre, for the use and behoof of the clergy. Thus Christianity becomes a Temple of Priestcraft.

SECTION III.

Protestantism the Overthrow of Christianity.

The Reformation, in common parlance, is that period of Church amendment which happened between A. D. 1517 and the end of the sixteenth century, and comprises, as Noah Webster tells us, "*the change of religion* from the corruptions of popery *to its primitive purity.*" This definition is less acceptable than the one proposed by that select writer named in a foregoing note, whose orthodox testimony I have so often adduced, and shall continue to adduce, in confirmation of my own researches in this argument. He calls it "a return *towards* primitive Christianity." Without stopping to analyze these conventional assumptions, I hasten to displace them with the anonymous and less general opinion, that the Protestant Reformation is the work of *extirpating* Christianity; that it began with partial revolts from ecclesiastical imposition, but has subsequently progressed by rational illumination of the human mind through the gradual development of natural science and philoso-

phy, and will end with a universal rejection of Christism, in the absolute reign of Reason.

I do not mean to assert that Luther and his immediate coädjutors attempted all this, or even conceived that such a work would ever be, or ever ought to be, accomplished. I mean to say that *the principle of Religious Liberty*, according to which the subordinate clergy attacked and overthrew the papal usurpation, *is broader than their ecclesiastical policy;* that to some minds, long before their day, *that* had promised more than was compassed by their undertakings; and that the spark struck from Saxon steel by the Protestant flint, presently kindled into a flame which still burns, and will continue to burn, to the utter consumption of all irrational authorities.

To see the truth of this statement, nothing more is necessary than to subject ecclesiastical events to the clear light of Reason, and to discriminate between cause and effect in the premises of our induction. This Church-historians generally have failed to do. They have begun their work with assuming that the Christian Faith is a pure principle, productive only of good; and when they come to consider its evil

workings, they forever impute these to the presumed hypocrisy and infidelity of believers. In this they resemble a Foulah, or other African fool, who puts his religious trust in *gree-gree*. One of these ridiculous saints, who carry their savior in a horn slung under the arm, as I have been told by a missionary to Liberia, disclosed his faith to a certain American sea-captain, by offering to stand as a mark to be shot at, declaring that his "horn of salvation" afforded a better protection to his person than any coat-of-mail. The captain of course was more willing to kill the superstition than the man, and therefore proposed to substitute the horn itself for the live target. The negro at length assented; and the shooter sent a bullet through the sacred horn, dashing it in pieces, and spilling the worthless *gree-gree* on the ground. "Ah! me see now," exclaimed the unwavering believer; "*dat* gree-gree *bad:* fill de horn wid *good* gree-gree, you no hit him den." It is precisely this kind of logic which has persuaded a great many well-meaning people in Christendom that popery is a corruption of Christianity, instead of its complemental development — that all the heresies, frauds, emula-

tions, persecutions and bloody contentions, which have marked the rise and progress of ecclesiastical power, from Paul the apostle to Leo the Vicar of God, are chargeable to the want of that very faith which has been universally professed, and for which all have ostensibly contended. It strikes me that men have never reasoned so badly on any other subject, and that Christians themselves would never have erred so widely, if they had not first discarded the plain maxim of their nominal master, that "a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree is known by its own fruit;" and that all "the corruptions of Christianity," so-called, are really legitimate fruits of its interior principle, is what I now propose to demonstrate.

There are two ways of doing this. In the first place, we may reason from cause to effect, and say that the religion of Paul, coupled as it has been with the historical character of mankind during the last eighteen hundred years, was well fitted to produce just such a mass of abominations as all good men in later times have protested against. Then we may

reason back again from effect to cause, and trace the lineage of the Man of Sin, link by link, to its lawful descent from the purest ministry of primitive Christianity. Let us try both these methods, and see what comes to light.

I have already argued that modern Christism was mainly invented by Paul. Nobody will deny that his writings are the best elucidation of what he called *his* gospel; nor that his life afforded an acceptable example of primitive Christianity. Paul was the most rational of all the apostles. In preaching, he often brought logic to his aid, and labored hard to make his theory of salvation understood. Yet he clearly saw that his religious system was not thoroughly sustained by Reason; and when some of his disciples, in order to substantiate their own belief, began to search for the sure foundation of what they had credited on superficial evidence, he discountenanced such "vain philosophy," and enjoined simple *faith* in the unexplored "mystery of godliness." But this accredited mystery has been looked into since the days of Paul, and found to be a transparent absurdity. The Christ of ecclesiastical wor-

ship was not Jesus, but a mere figment of superstition. The sentiment of Divine alienation and human perdition, and the notion of reconciliation and redemption by any sort of atonement, are follies now nearly antiquated. Men are not saved, but rather deluded and stultified, by faith in these falsehoods. Yet such are the elements of Paul's religion; and though there is not a shadow of truth in them, their import of error seems less egregious than his arrogation of Divine authority in their announcement. He declared himself to be "an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father," and commended the reception of his doctrine, "not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth," said he) "the word of God." In all this I suppose Paul was religiously honest, and pleased his conscience with the fancy of "doing God service," as much as in his former mad career against the harmless followers of Jesus. But, if so, he must have labored under the grossest hallucination of mind; and error is always pernicious, however unwittingly fostered. To reap as we sow is a law of the Universe. Goodness is the natural fruit of Truth, and nothing

but a harvest of evil could have been rationally anticipated from such a sowing of falsities. Paul blended some morality with his religion; but if we will distinguish this from that, we shall find the fruits of the latter to be only mischievous.

It is impossible to accept the Christian faith without first renouncing Liberty of Thought, and subjecting Reason to the yoke of arbitrary authority. The mind must be darkened with the fear of offending God by self-respect, and the Soul must assume the humble attitude of one who craves a priestly license to speak or think. It must be presumed allowable to investigate only in the region of what is known to be true or possible, while "secret things belong to God," who has forbidden all curiosity about sacred mysteries, on pain of his everlasting displeasure. The limits of lawful inquiry must be mentally fixed within the biblical compass of Revelation — not only in what the prophets and apostles have written, but not exceeding what the ordained expositors of this Word of God are able to explain. This is just the mental condition which fits one to be imposed upon by every religious mountebank that supervenes. A man who

was unreasonable enough to believe that God had made a special confidant of Paul, enduing him with supernatural powers and honoring him with miraculous and superhuman prerogatives, was of course bound to take the apostle's word for his whole creed. Paul might have preached a very different religion, and still have made the same converts; for, the mind once committed to authority, it were as easy to swallow one absurdity as another. Thus the worship of Jesus commended the adoration of his mother, and in this idolatry Christians naturally graduated, till they were ready, at the word of ecclesiastical discipline, to bow the knee with devout alacrity to the Cross itself, and even to the supposed relics and pictures of notable saints. Nor was it a step, only in a formal sense, from faith in a spiritual mediator to the acts of auricular confession and priestly absolution.

The example of Paul, too, in professing a divine mission, in assuming "the care of all the churches," and in presuming to institute a line of successors to his ministry through Timothy, Titus, and other bishops of his own making, whom he commanded to "ordain elders in every city," was nothing less

than episcopacy in the bud, of which papacy is the natural flower. This device was just as sure to issue in the establishment of a diabolical hierarchy, as that "evil men and seducers" would discover its adaptation to their policy; and, in giving it credibility by his own magnanimous influence, Paul did more for the Devil's aggrandizement, to use a figure of speech, than the greatest scoundrel that ever lived. I do not impeach the apostle's motive: notwithstanding his occasional insinuation of a persecuting spirit, as in speaking of Hymeneus and Alexander, whom for heresy he had "delivered unto Satan, that they learn not to blaspheme;" not altogether overlooking his intolerance of Woman's self-hood, whom he suffered not to teach, or to speak in the church, but commanded to be in silence and subjection; with all due allowance for these conspicuous faults, yet, considering his many bold and happy utterances for Truth and Conscience, I charitably conclude that the Prime Minister of the ideal Christ was honestly mistaken in the grand thought and cardinal act of his life. Be precious the motive whose guerdon was

far too costly: still wrongful the zealot, and hateful the fruit of his doings.

That papacy is the proper crown of episcopacy, and that the whole ecclesiastical system, with all its storied abominations, is the natural form of the Christian Faith, will perhaps appear still more evident on reversing the argument and reasoning retrogressively from ultimate developments to their pristine causes. Let us no longer confound *the papal office* with any personality of its temporary incumbents. The Chair of St. Peter was not self-constituted, neither is it the creature of any pope; and no man has ever been able to sit therein against the express will of some prior agency by which his pretensions have been maintained. Certain abuses of pontifical power are doubtless chargeable to the wicked disposition of functionaries; but even such abuses lose their individual designation in the fact that they could never happen without the virtual sanction of the very people on whom they are practised. This was the case during the whole absolute reign of Priestcraft, when "the foolishness of preaching" was nearly set aside for the more effective sway of decep-

tion, terror and torture. Read the history of monkery, Jesuitism and the Inquisition, nay, of the whole Catholic Church — its pious frauds, its constrained austerities, its barefaced simony, its intolerance, persecutions, and complete despotism over the souls of men, and say how it was possible for a few men of the mitre and cowl thus to subjugate and drive the masses at will, against Reason and Nature and every manly and human inclination. You will say it was in "the dark ages" that these things happened, before many had learned the art of thinking, or mankind generally had made any considerable acquisitions of physical or psychical knowledge. True, but with individual exceptions; for Plato, Socrates, Aristotle and others had already reared their distinctive monuments of intelligence, showing that an age of light preceded this midnight of the Christian era. But the teachings of those classic sages were afterwards suppressed until they were practically forgotten, and thus their humanizing influence was smothered for many centuries. No doubt *it was dark* when this was done; but tell me who put out those lights, and think not to put me off with saying *it was dark*, and therefore the people

stumbled. I tell you it was not dark till Priestcraft made it so. The Constitution of Man, and all the dependencies of body and soul were essentially the same in the middle ages as in former times. The same World of Sense was unfolded to individual minds, through like faculties of observation and induction, and the unerring Word of God, *Conviction*, was as optional a guide then as now. Nor were men half so blind as has been fancied. As one may shut his eyes and walk in darkness at noonday, so multitudes, distrusting self, discarding Reason, and putting faith for knowledge, have thought it dark all over Christendom; or they have believed themselves blind, when they were only blind-*folded*. It was the soul-shrivelling belief in oneself as a "miserable sinner," in God as a terrible adversary, in the Church as the only "ark of salvation," in the priest as the lawful minister of "saving grace," and in doubt as the spiritual form of the Devil: it was faith in this tissue of absurdities, which chained the souls of men, paralyzed their self-hood, and made them the willing victims of priestly imposition, such as history describes. Had Christism taken this gross form in

the beginning, developing at once such immoralities, blasphemies, and despotic cruelties, as have characterized its maturity, superstition itself would never have swallowed it; but Paul announced the faith in smoother terms, giving it "the form of sound words" and a sweet savor of Charity. His gospel was aptly symbolized by "the little book" which John begged of the angel in his Apocalypse, and found it as honey to the taste, but bitter after eating. In the mouth of simple belief, it is "the mystery of godliness;" but in the belly of rational digestion, it is clearly "the mystery of iniquity." The Christian Faith is the some mystery, from first to last. Had Paul begun by preaching its *iniquity*, the grand project of Priestcraft had certainly failed. It is only the prestige of its original *godliness* that has kept it alive so long Now, the voice of "the seventh angel" of Revelation is beginning to sound, and, to many, this "mystery of God" is finished.

For about fifteen hundred years after "the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch," there was but one grand embodiment of this *mystery;* and that was the Catholic Church. A few disaffected

saints were always coming out and standing aloof from this primitive establishment, calling themselves Christians, but denounced as heretics by the apostolic succession, and so cut off from the genuine body of Christ. These outcasts from the pale of ecclesiastical fellowship were often numerous enough to form a separate sect; and, but for the intolerance and persecuting power of "the scarlet-colored beast," the votaries of Religious Liberty would presently have outgrown the mischievous tendencies of their mysterious faith. With an impartial protection of the civil power, the laity would soon have tamed the episcopal monster, and, under the rational lead of Arius, Paul of Samosata, or even of Father Eusebius himself, who is said to have "faltered exceedingly on the doctrine of Christ's true and absolute divinity," would have forestalled "the Man of Sin," by setting up Natural Religion, even before the reign of Constantine. But Priestcraft obtained the sinister patronage of imperial Rome, and the mystery was cherished. It was not until about the middle of the twelfth century that the liberty-loving Christians gained a sectarian footing, and began to multiply

through the inciting influence of persecution. Peter Waldo, a man of wealth and influence, by translating the four gospel narratives into French, and preaching boldly against clerical impositions, aroused a spirit of inquiry which was not again to be suppressed. Waldo was the first successful agent of the Reformation. The Waldenses who rallied in his name, were not a sect, so much as a community of sects, including all "who embraced any tenets against the prevailing superstition." These truth-seekers, to escape the fire and sword of persecution, fled from their native land and found a hiding-place in the valleys of Piedmont. Here they multiplied for several hundred years, quite unobserved by the dread ecclesiastical foe. Fugitives from religious despotism flocked to their standard of human fellowship, by which means the community became so populous that, in the beginning of the fifteenth century, when their retreat was discovered, their numbers alone were enough to discourage the exterminating powers of bigotry. The papal authority made a desperate effort, but failed to subdue them. Their cause was strengthened presently by the less obscure influence

of Wickliffe, Cobham and Huss: the first translating the whole Bible into English, as the aptest occasional instrument for chastening ecclesiastical pretensions; the second, a lord, soldier and knight, "high in the king's favor," who became an earnest disciple of Wickliffe, and an efficient advocate of reformatory principles, though dying in their behalf; and the third, a rector of the University of Prague, and confessor to Sophia, queen of Bohemia, who, indoctrinated by the writings of the first English reformer, imitated so well the works of Wickliffe and the intrepid zeal of Cobham, that out of the labors and sufferings of Huss sprang a second community of truth-seekers, denominated *the United Brethren.* A union was soon after effected between these Brethren and the Waldenses; and the German invention of printing in 1440 was remarkably opportune for the success of the two confederate bands of religious reformers. Books now being readily multiplied, many began learning to read who had never before thought of it. The means of intelligence becoming general, knowledge increased, superstition began to loosen its hold on the minds of the people, inquiry was encouraged, and thoughts of

the wise — seeds of the Reformation, were more widely diffused. To these preparations of popular susceptibility, add the general disaffection of kings toward the papal crown, while "the Roman pontiff sat unconcerned upon his throne, neither feeling nor fearing any evil. The heretics of the valleys were too remote and presumed to be too feeble to awaken any alarm. The inquisitorial fires, it was thought, had burnt out the followers of Wickliffe and of Huss, and holy father had nothing now to do but to trample on a prostrate world, and to live in extravagance, lust and ease, at the expense of all mankind."

This was the condition of the public mind in Christendom, and the precise juncture of civil and religious tendencies, in the opening of the sixteenth century, when a decisive blow was struck for Liberty of Conscience. The honor of this act has been generally accorded to Luther, though in truth it belongs no more to him than to any one of his illustrious predecessors. He was quite too rigid in his opinions, too partial and circumscribed in his religious views, too exacting in his notions of Church discipline, too conservative of ecclesiastical authority, and withal too

superstitious in his creed, to rank as *the first* of Reformers. His nominal achievements were mostly effected by collateral agencies, and his real success is due to the smallness of his attempt. For what was the gist of his action as a reformer? Verily, in its beginning, nothing but one of the external *abuses* of popish power — not papacy itself. "The removal of that gross abuse of church authority, *the sale of indulgences*, together with the silence of his enemies, would have restored him to the peaceful obedience of a dutiful son." But the harshness of his adversary produced an instructive effect, so that when the controversy waxed warm and dangerous, Luther ventured to say to his friend Spalatinus, "I would whisper in your ear, that *I begin to entertain doubts* whether the Roman pontiff be not the very antichrist."

In 1525, John, elector of Saxony, "employed Luther and Melancthon to draw up a code of ecclesiastical laws, for the formation and establishment of the Saxon Church. He proceeded to remove from their offices all those clergy who either by immorality or want of talent had been a burden and a disgrace to

tne holy function, and in their stead placed men of an opposite stamp. Several of the neighboring states followed the example of John; and thus a *Lutheran Church* first obtained a complete establishment through a considerable part of the Germanic empire, and the authority of Rome was trampled in the dust." So writes the orthodox historian from whom I quote at large. I shall not dispute with any ecclesiastic about the christening of a church: they may call this joint contrivance of Luther, Melancthon and John, by whatever name they choose; but I object to any implication that the act just related constituted these men reformers. Setting up the Lutheran Church was no part of the Reformation, nor did it involve at all the spirit of Protestantism. An unerring clue to this is to be found in the doings of the memorable *Diet of Spires*, whose most important session was in the year 1526. The concluding act of that conventional authority was a "*unanimous* resolution that every state should be left to adopt those measures, in religion, judged best, till a general council should be convened to decide on the disputed subjects. This circumstance was truly favorable to the cause of

Religious Liberty, and the state of affairs between Charles and Clement contributed greatly to strengthen the hands of Luther and his associates. But their dispute had no sooner ended, than the pope obtained the promise of imperial help against the floods of heresy which were breaking in upon the Church from all quarters. A second diet was convoked at Spires, in which the interest of the emperor succeeded so far as to revoke, by a *majority* of votes, the *unanimous* decision of the former diet, and he forbade any departure from the catholic faith and discipline, till a general council should be assembled. This decree of the second diet was passed about three years after the former, and, as might be expected, was very ill-received by the elector of Saxony and other Lutheran princes. They conceived that a resolution passed *unanimously* was of much greater force than one passed afterwards only by a *majority*. Accordingly they entered their PROTEST against the decree of the emperor and his majority, and resolved to maintain the ecclesiastical code they had established. From the circumstance of *this protest*, the reformers and their

civil supporters were afterwards denominated PROTESTANTS."

Thus it appears that Protestantism, though the word implies but a mere negation, involves a positive principle, as interpreted from its earliest workings. The action of the first Protestants was against the *repeal* of an act of *Toleration ;* and this was a direct attempt to supersede ecclesiastical authority by the principle of *Individual Freedom.* I do not presume that this principle was adopted by the first diet of Spires, nor that it was clearly discerned and steadily contended for by the best agents of the Reformation. I maintain only that their action was based on it. They may have wrought for selfish ends, in the spirit of Henry the Eighth; Luther and John might have coupled Wrong with Right, by asserting that for themselves which they withheld from others; they might have proposed to resist the inimical authority above them, without relinquishing certain unlawful powers in their own hands; they might have said, "We will put down the pope, but we will be bishops still." Indeed, history puts all these potentials in the indicative mode. Episcopacy was retained in the Lutheran

Church, and the king became the head of all ecclesiastical, as well as political authority. In England the process of reformation was still more farcical; for Henry not only had the basest motive for repudiating his wife and disowning allegiance to the pope, but seized on papal power and imitated its worst abuses. Under the sway of this spurious protestantism, persecution soon became as rampant and bloody as that of the Roman hierarchy. In fact, this schoolmaster of Christendom has not yet been dismissed, whereby the people have been and are to be whipped into a knowledge of the truth as it is in Liberty. If the laity have been more willing to serve a bishop than he a pope, it is only because of their grosser ignorance. If the clergy might lawfully resist the domination of the Roman pontiff, so, by the same fundamental principle, may every man reject the pretensions of every priest. This was hardly conceived in the beginning of the Reformation, and therefore the principle of Protestantism was but partially interpreted. The Rights of Man are not generally understood even to-day, and so the spirit of Protestantism is not fully developed nor the work of the Reformation half accom-

plished. England had nothing but its name for centuries after breaking with Rome, and the Lutheran Church was a strong check on its progress. Protestantism does not build meeting-houses, except for the purpose of preaching down ecclesiastical domination. Yet it carefully distinguishes human Rights from prerogatives. It tolerates all voluntary idolatries, but compels no man to support one gospel or another — not even its own. It leaves all mankind to worship God at will, or let it alone, but will have no proxy in the work. To maintain any kind of religion is not its object, but to free the World from compulsory veneration, constraint of Conscience, and the taxations of bigotry. It presumes that all genuine devotion is spiritual — not a thing of observation or conventional control, but a matter between the Soul and God — a transaction in the closet of the heart; and there it leaves it.

But Protestantism is not a non-resistant: it is no do-nothing, when occasion calls for action. It lets religionists have their way, on condition that they are peaceable; but it wars with every encroaching power, and gives no quarter to its avowed antagonists.

Priestcraft became its prisoner in the sixteenth century. Popery has subsequently been dethroned, and beaten in the contest for supremacy. Episcopacy has lost half its sway in Christendom, and every priest has been effectually admonished to mend his ways or prepare to resign his living.

In consequence of these aggressive movements of the Protestant Principle, ecclesiastical authority is dying out; Reason is gaining its legitimate ascendency; multitudes are analyzing the mysteries of faith; the Bible is beginning to be externally understood, and prized only for its internal truth; the Church is fast becoming rationalized, and Christianity itself is everywhere giving way to the more humanizing tendencies of Natural Religion.

Such is the Reformation: it is the work of demolishing the grand Temple of Priestcraft. It began with asserting the precedence of private conviction to conventional opinion, and will end with a thorough subversion of sacerdotal dominion and a total rejection of the Christian Faith. Protestantism is the little stone in Daniel's vision, cut out of the mountain of

Humanity without hands, rolling and smiting the huge image of antique despotism, till it be ground to powder and driven away by the summer airs of Liberty and Toleration. So shall Christianity perish and make room for the Gospel of Jesus.

PART THIRD.

WHAT REASON HAS TO DO WITH THE GOSPEL OF JESUS.

"Why, even of yourselves, judge ye not what is Right?"—LUKE XII. 57.

HAVING established the position that all Christendom has erred from the real character and teachings of Jesus, we are prepared to entertain the consecutive inquiry, *What was the Gospel* which the Church has counterfeited for more than eighteen hundred years? I answer, *It was the Religion of Nature;* and, to elaborate the evidence of this important fact, will disclose the paramount aim of the writer, and bring both him and the reader to the end of this book.

In this undertaking it will be necessary to reject entirely the stale authorities on which the Church relies implicitly, while we canvass the sacred opinions and hearsays of the past. As faith is the proper

medium of Mystery, so knowledge is that of Truth. History shows the aptness of dogmatism and credulity to commend falsehood, and establish error, of which Christianity is an imposing example. These blind guides are ever leading men astray, who shut their eyes against the light of Reason, and grow deaf to the voice of Nature, crying in every Soul, "Why, even of yourselves, judge ye not what is Right?"

The application of Reason to the Gospel of Jesus is two-fold: for, in the first place, it is the sole interpreter of tradition, and, as such, the only reliable expositor, at this late day, of what Jesus taught; and, in the second place, being the grand interpreter of Nature, which is the only Revelation of God, it is the absolute test of its truthfulness and Divine Authenticity. The words of Jesus, which I have set as a motto to this argument, are presumptive evidence that his Gospel is yet to be identified with that of Nature and Reason.

In order to a proper understanding of his life and doctrine, it is needful to study the character of his biographers, and what they undertook as writers, as well as their intellectual and moral fitness for the work. A knowledge of these subjects will qualify us, in a measure, to discern the latent implication of

meaning in what has been related, together with the import of times, circumstances, and personal motives, which have conspired to produce those accounts; enabling us to discriminate between what is written of facts and mere phases, which the writers themselves were generally incapable of doing. Finally, from the truthful premises thus prepared, it will remain to elaborate, by logical induction, a Character which has been grossly misconceived, and a Religion which Jesus preached only to the winds of ignorance and superstition. To this task let us go at once, guided by the most conservative candor, and plying the most unscrupulous logic.

CHAPTER I.

THE BIOGRAPHERS OF JESUS.

"I have meat to eat that ye know not of." — JOHN IV. 32.

I HARDLY need remind the intelligent reader that the class of Scripture authors here designated are without a name in general history, and that all we know of them is founded in their own testimony. This fact in no wise disparages the quality of their reputation, however, such as it is: it expresses merely limitation in quantity. It is no negation of character to be unknown. History conserves some of the worst characters that have ever lived, while there can be no doubt that many of the best human examples have perished out of memory. It is not at all singular, therefore, that in an age when writers were rare for want of readers, men who are now famous only for their admiration of Jesus, passed their lives so much like the mass of people as to excite no literary remark. Indeed, their testimony, so far as it may be construed of themselves is not direct; and this consideration,

instead of invalidating its force, ought to enhance its value. For, in writing the life of their worshipful master, they barely implicate themselves, without aim, and thus furnish us with certain elements of their own characters. Moreover, their testimony is often mutual, though undesigned; for, treating all of the same sacred subject, their respective statements are liable to be incidentally confirmed or contradicted. In this circumstance we find an unerring clue to their veracity, while from their own style and sentiment it is easy to deduce the most positive and reliable tests of their intelligence. Thus in this chapter I propose a process of inquiry which promises just that amount and kind of information which is fundamental to a thorough and comprehensive view of *Jesus and his Gospel.*

SECTION I.

The Biographers of Jesus are worthy of confidence as sincere and honest men.

For the truth of this thesis we have something more positive than the opinions of the most learned and classical churchmen, or than would be the direct testimony of their own contemporaries, if their own lives had been actually written. In the accredited

history of the times in which Jesus lived without reputation, taught only Virtue, and died a martyr to Truth, we have the premises for an irresistible argument, that his immediate followers were a truth-seeking and conscience-serving class. If they had been of an opposite character, they could have had no motive for listening to his chastening instructions; neither would he, with ordinary powers of discernment, have companied with mere hypocrites or unrepentant sinners.

We approach an argument, from which it will by and by appear that neither Jesus nor his Gospel afforded any scope for the sinister motives of mankind. Christians, surely, will allow me to say, in advance, and to all unbelievers I promise to make good the assumption in the ensuing chapter, that the personal influence of Jesus was fitted to draw into his society only the pure-minded and virtuously inclined; while it as naturally repelled the groveling and the guilty. I will further assume that he *knew* his associates, and that he chose them with due regard to affinity in heart and soul. I incline to the opinion, therefore, that the disciples of the living Jesus, who, for a series of years followed him for instruction, and rejoiced in his friendly sympathy, were among the best moral examples of that age.

But the thesis I am to maintain applies especially to those literary disciples who undertook to write the life of Jesus. Judging from the havoc the Church has made of the numerous Gospel narratives, which are said to have been written before the days of Constantine, it would seem that many attempted what they were by no means competent to perform; for, out of about fifty of these, all but four were committed to the flames either of discretion or bigotry. But there is no means of determining, at this late day, whether so many of the Biographers of Jesus, or the functionaries of ecclesiastical authority who acted the part of censors both on them and us, were most in error. The Church has never condescended to tell us whether in burning the parchments she impeached also the motives of their authors; and I have only the liberty left me to presume not. It is with very little gratitude to the foregone powers of Christian domination, that I find myself thus restricted in my researches to the four narratives of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These are the only New Testament writers whose characters I shall, in this place, attempt to defend. They are presumed to have executed their several tasks a little after the death of Jesus; and, if so, I see not how they could have been moved thereto

by other incentives than a genuine regard for him and his teachings.

It is certain that their motive could not have been mere fame or popularity. Jesus had been publicly condemned and executed for the two-fold crime of treason and religious imposture. His followers were hunted by the same spirit of persecution, through all Jewry, and "even unto strange cities." To write a book in defence of this reputed outlaw, was what no self-seeking man would have done. Thus to fly in the face of public opinion, was no method of popularity, but rather likely to draw down upon one's own head the very reproaches of the prime offender.

It is not to be thought likely that the evangelists were moved to their work with a view to its pecuniary profit. The demand for books of any kind was then so small that no author could calculate on a living as the wages of literary toil; and, when money was thought of as a partial recompense for writing, no man in his senses would choose an unpopular subject. Just think of the mental posture of four men of ready wit, and no conscience, each sitting down to write a book for mammon's sake, and all hitting on the same theme, and that the life and teachings of Jesus! Such a coincidence is too droll for sober reflection; it never happened.

So far as history throws any light on the origin of these books, it justifies the opinion that they were not made generally public until such time as their subject became popular. Instead of cherishing any hope of gain or fame, it is more reasonable to suppose those authors were induced to execute their tasks as privately as possible, by the apprehension of some magisterial reproof for their doings. In this predicament, it is hardly conceivable that these Biographers of Jesus should have cherished a more selfish motive than the devout pleasure of dwelling on the memory of their Lord, and furnishing the means of a like enjoyment to the few who sympathized with them in their religious affection.

This view is in harmony with the spirit of their writings. These are plain narratives, in which there appear no egotism of authorship, and no attempt at literary display. In this the evangelists agree: they keep themselves out of sight, and make their readers think only of JESUS. Yet otherwise the style of these books is sufficiently various to indicate the respective individualities of their distinct origin. The internal evidence that they were produced by different hands is abundant and conclusive. Besides various idiotisms and diverse leadings of thought, there are numerous discrepancies in these scriptures, touching the same

incidents and consecution of events. Mere biblists commonly regard these scriptural disagreements with aversion, supposing they involve the credit of the Bible disparagingly; but this they do only in reference to the notion of its Divine authorship, whereas in truth they tend rather to establish its human authenticity. They refute the suspicion of any collusion among these writers, and show that each wrote independently of all the rest. This fact is what constitutes the value of their dissected testimony, and makes their general agreement confirm the integral truth of what they relate. In the light of these reflections, the particular veracity of each is sustained by all the evangelists; while all disagreements in their several accounts are referred to varieties of individual conception, and separate sources of information. We learn hence not to look for absolute Truth in their statements, but only for such conceptions of it as were afforded by their respective powers of discernment: and when to the foregoing reflections we come to connect a consistent view of their competency, position and aim, we shall not doubt of their fidelity to their own convictions.

SECTION II.

The Biographers of Jesus were competent witnesses of his external example and teachings; but, as to the import of these, they attempted nothing more than to recite their natural impressions.

Being persuaded that these writers were men of veracity, we are yet prepared to take their word only within the known limits of their intelligence. To ascertain the extent of their reliability as exponents of Jesus and his Gospel, it remains to consider their opportunities for information, as well as their ability and will to profit by them; and finally, in what regards they might still err with honesty.

As to their opportunities for observation, and their actual, earnest attention, there can be no more doubt than of their veracity; since they professed to have been the most intimate companions of Jesus during the most active part of his career, and agree in according to each other the character of genuine disciples, who shared together the most expressive tokens of his confidence and love. Of a corresponding ability to investigate, and of a docility equal to the instructive powers of their master, we ought to think more deliberately: though, without hesitation, we may pronounce upon their ordinary mental endowments as qualifying them to comprehend all sensible phenomena

with sufficient exactness to communicate their manifestation to others. They certainly had eyes and ears, and could not well be mistaken as to what they actually saw and heard. We may safely rely on the reality of what they relate, therefore, concerning the facts and events in which they personally participated. But it is to be noted that these writers did not restrict their narratives to matters of their own observation. They swelled the memoirs of Jesus from sources of which they make no mention, and often dilated upon incidents and marvels of which they certainly knew nothing but hearsay. It is impossible to form any reliable opinion of such accounts, even when they are reasonable in themselves, which is not always the case. That these evangelists should thus weaken the credit of their own recitals by connecting them with such a superabundance of things having seemingly no other foundation than that of being "most surely believed" by one or more of them, is not more singular than the various absurd conjectures with which they largely superseded the rational doctrines of their chosen teacher. These I have already canvassed, and barely allude to them here that I may remark how little harm they would have occasioned, had not later believers invested them with an authority which the Biographers of Jesus never dreamed of. They wrote

simply what they believed to be true, "because it seemed good," as Luke declared; that others "might believe" also, as John said; and not, as any one of them pretended, because the Holy Ghost moved them to it, or in any wise qualified them for the task, They assumed the inspiration of the more ancient prophets; but self-knowledge prevented their imagining such an origin for their own writings. Their belief in the supernatural character and mission of Jesus was grounded in the same semi-rational suasion according to which Nicodemus argued, that "no man could perform the miracles which he wrought, except God were with him." These assumptions were as honest on their part as their inability to comprehend the meaning of much which they really knew, and more which they as positively believed. If many in later times have been disposed to take their sentiments for more than they were worth, this is nothing for which those writers were responsible.

SECTION III.

The Biographers of Jesus lost sight of the rational part of his Gospel, for want of ability to comprehend it.

It has been very widely conjectured that Jesus commissioned certain of his disciples to write out the

substance of his Gospel, and that for this purpose he told them the Holy Ghost would come to their assistance after his departure, and refresh their memories with whatever he had taught them. But this imagined promise appears to have been very imperfectly fulfilled, so far as it applies to the four evangelists whose writings have been preserved. Not one of them has acknowledged its fulfilment in his own case, though all must have felt bound to do so, had they been conscious of such auxiliary impressions, or of any other extraneous aid in writing. Indeed, they do not intimate that Jesus ever requested them to write his life, or to make any record whatever of his teachings. On the contrary, their testimony refutes the hypothesis, showing that the oldest and most intimate disciples of Jesus often failed to understand what he would teach; that none of the apostles comprehended the Gospel; and that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, instead of interpreting their Master, have only added marvel to the mystery of their own misconception.

That the followers of Jesus generally were far from apprehending the breadth of his moral system, and that he was aware of their comparative indocility, were often evinced by his manner of address and devices for communication, as well as by their occasional perplexity with his apothems. After being a long

time under his tuition, some of them had imbibed so little of his humane spirit, that when certain parents brought their infants to him, that they might receive the magnetic and spiritual influence of his manipulations, "his disciples rebuked those that brought them," says Mark. "But when Jesus saw it, *he was much displeased*, and said unto them, *Suffer* the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the Kingdom of God."

At the time of his interview with the young man who inquired what good thing he should do to inherit eternal life, Jesus, seeing that he went away dissatisfied, remarked to others in hearing, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God! And his disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith, Children, how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the Kingdom of God. It is easier for a cable* to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God. And *his disciples were astonished out of measure*, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus, looking upon them, saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."

* *Kamilon*, a cable, instead of *kamelon*, a camel, is doubtless the original reading.

Here the nucleus of perplexity among the pupils of Jesus appears to be the novel announcement, that affluence is commonly unfavorable to moral development. This aphorism not being understood, the preceptor attempts to paraphrase it to their conception; but without effect. Presently perceiving their unsusceptibility to so refined a sentiment, he sagely dismisses it with a mere salvo for their faith.

The same writer has preserved the following touchstone of their average moral culture: "And he came to Capernaum; and, being in the house, he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace; for by the way they had *disputed who should be the greatest.*"

These and other incidents of like import are related as occurring but a short time before the death of Jesus, and involve the characters of his most cherished disciples, who, in the light of these quotations, do not appear to have been such patterns of godliness and proficients in heavenly Wisdom, as some are prone to fancy.

Nicodemus could not fathom the doctrine of Spirit-birth, neither did any of the apostles at the time Jesus appeared to them after he had left the physical form of life. At the Spirit-manifestation of Moses and Elijah, together with "the transfiguration" of Jesus,

who, as the world ought to know, was as good "a medium" as any in these days, Peter, James and John were "sore afraid;" and afterward, being desired to tell no man what they had seen "till the Son of Man were risen from the dead, they kept that saying with themselves, *questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.*" It does not appear that they ever understood that saying, or acquired any rational conception of the Spirit-World.

It was by one of the Church-named apostles that Jesus was betrayed, while all the rest "forsook him and fled." Peter denied his acquaintance at his arraignment before Caiaphas, and, in the awful hour of his crucifixion, none turned a pitying eye toward the cross, save a few women who looked on "afar off." Though, according to the reputed testimony of the evangelists, he expressly told them that he should rise the third day after lying down in death, not one of them believed it. When the Sabbath was passed, three women went to the sepulchre to anoint his cold body; but meeting there a Spirit in the phasis of a "young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment, they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here:

behold where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man, for they were afraid."

"Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. And she went and told it to them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they heard that he was alive and had been seen of her, *believed not.* After that he appeared in another form unto two of them as they walked and went into the country, and they went and told it unto the residue; *neither believed they them.* Afterward he appeared unto *the eleven*, as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because *they believed not* them that had seen him after he was risen."

So testifies Mark; and Luke, taking up this account where the former dropped it, says the apostles "were terrified and affrighted "at the spiritual appearance of Jesus, "and *supposed that they had seen a Spirit;*" which language implies error within error.

Such was the mental condition of the first believ-

ers in their strange predicament at the crucifixion of their Lord — a plight really as void of faith as intelligence — a state of confusion such as no force of circumstances could have incited, had they properly understood the Gospel of Jesus.

I allow that subsequently the apostles increased in knowledge, and so grew in faith. Two of them talking unwittingly with the Spirit of their Lord, on the third day after he expired on the cross, told him that they "trusted it had been he that should have redeemed *Israel*,"— not *the World;* and none of them supposed that Jesus was more catholic than Moses, until Peter had a peculiar vision, signifying that "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted of him." If they could so far misconstrue the living voice of their instructor as to make him the Savior of the Jews only, might they not as easily misapprehend the *principle* of salvation, and make him *the atoning sacrifice* instead of *the World's Exemplar?* Nay, that they did slide into this very error through their predilections for Judaism, is what I have already demonstrated at large.

Moreover, the manifest incoherency of style in the narratives of the four evangelists, determines their incompetency beyond a cavil: their incompe-

tency I mean not for what they undertook, but for their accredited work. If they *understood* the doctrine of the preacher on Olivet, they have singularly failed to communicate their intelligence. It is plain that they make no attempt to set forth a system, or to explain their Master; and that, in recording his sayings and the incidents of his life, they pay little regard to the order of occurrences in time and place. They present his teachings in detached portions, and jumble together facts and fancies, maxims and marvels, all in the same chapter. This want of method indicates vagueness of conception; and doubtless both have conspired to tear the moral and religious system of Jesus into fragments, and present it to the world just such an ore of Truth as we find in these writings. In fact, these sacred historians were no philosophers, nor did they pretend to be. To them the Gospel of Jesus was a matter of profound wonderment. His life and mission they treated as admirable mysteries. All his precepts they regarded as commands, and all his doings as miracles. Salvation, as they dreamed of it, was what "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart of Man conceived — something for their *faith*, of which they seem to have *known nothing* beyond the bare word of their Lord, whom they deified and adored in the place of God. How absurd,

to suppose that minds subjected to such preposterous sentiments, were still penetrated with an *understanding* of the Gospel!

If, according to the foregoing argument, the Biographers of Jesus were *men of veracity;* if they were favored with *peculiar opportunities for information* touching the main subjects of their writings; and if their *faculties of perception* were equal to an accurate survey of scenes and events in which they certainly participated with interest, then are their memoirs *truthful*, so far as they concern the facts and phenomena of their own experience and observation. Nevertheless, if they were so young in intellect, so semi-rational in their habitudes of thought, and so prepossessed by Jewish dogmas, as to be unable to grasp the principles on which those facts and phenomena were based — as actually to displace them with fanciful assumptions, then must their books be fraught with error, just in proportion to their attempts at explication. Instead of communicating the Gospel, they wrapped up its elements in a mystery of their own making; and to this weft of misconception they superadded many uncertain reports. It becomes the work of Reason therefore, out of this medley of truth and falsehood to make certain excerptions, and from them as premises to infer the real life and lore of Jesus.

CHAPTER II.

THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF JESUS.

"It is the Spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing." — JOHN VI. 63.

IN this chapter it is proposed to do virtually what the nominal biographers of Jesus attempted but failed to accomplish. This seems almost presumptuous, inasmuch as there are no materials for the work, except what have been furnished by the very writers whose inefficiency I have already argued at length. To justify my position, however, let it be recollected that I have made no indiscriminate reflections on either those authors or their labors, but have rather maintained their ability, faithfulness and success, as observers and recorders of many consequential sayings and doings of Jesus. Thus far they labored not in vain; and had they done no more, there might have been less for our undoing. But they drew a veil of mystery over what they could not comprehend, and later Christians called the same *Shechinah;* and soon men feared to touch the sacred veil.

What then is the charge I bring against the saints who led the canon in the council of Nice? Simply *the want of Reason* — a charge which applies to all Christendom for eighteen hundred years since. They read the Life of Jesus just as Christians read the Bible to this day — with the top of their heads only. To correct this error is merely to open our eyes and hold the book right side up. This is what I propose in regard to the Life and Character of Jesus. Our position for doing this is about as favorable as that of his contemporary disciples. True, we cannot see his natural face, nor hear his voice, nor quite discern his amiable bearing, though we may fancy them all as we ponder his written thought — "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing. The *words* that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit and they are *life*," said he; and those words are literally ours. The Life of Jesus is thus portrayed in spirit, if not in form, and in this sense he is even nearer to the *souls* of men to-day than to his bodily followers in the days of his own flesh. The maxims of his living tongue have been literally inscribed, not merely on parchment, but on the hearts of mankind. Many of his works, too, by which he preferred to be known rather than human testimony, have been truly recorded by the evangelists, through whose memoirs we ought to go back in thought to the Mount of Olives, to the

Jewish synagogues, beyond the popular understanding of the first century, to the very sayings and doings of Jesus, and thence deduce our own estimate of his personality and mission. For this work we are qualified by greater freedom from prejudice, by superior attainments in science and philosophy, by more intelligible and copious revelations from the Spirit World, and by more effective communings with Jesus himself, than were allotted to the most enlightened followers of his footprints in Galilee.

SECTION I.

Jesus a Natural Man.

Some have supposed we have only hearsay for the *existence* of Jesus. This is a mistake. We know that certain men formerly existed on Earth, by the same rule that we know others to exist in distant parts of the World. Reason traverses distance in time as readily as distance in space. To me there is the same degree and kind of evidence that Aristotle once lived, and wrote sage thoughts, as that Dickens now lives, and writes "Household Words." The Book of Job must have had an author, and this is as much as many know of Grace Greenwood, or Fanny Fern. The scripture verifies its writer, and thought

denotes a thinker. I have never seen the chirography of Euclid, and yet I know geometry must have had a personal origin; so, though Jesus left nothing in manuscript that I know of, yet his teachings, as preserved in our literature, demonstrate the reality of a Character which nobody could counterfeit. Besides, hearsay itself may be verified to our own conception; for,

1. Veracity cannot falsify knowingly;

2. Intelligence cannot falsify unknowingly; Therefore,

3. Veracity *and* Intelligence cannot falsify at all.

Now, to apply this syllogism, who has said that Jesus once lived and taught in Galilee? Why, his fifty biographers, whose manuscripts were carried in the bosom of the Church to the council of Nice, as well as their colleagues of the New Testament, and tacitly all other writers who were contemporary with them. Did not they who wrote the memoirs of that peculiar personage, professing to have been his companions in life — did not they *know* whether the hero of their narratives was real or fabulous? Certainly. Well, is it possible that all the literary men of that age were *liars?* If not, then the existence of Jesus of Nazareth, the supposed son of Joseph and Mary, who preached on Olivet, and was crucified at Jerusalem, is a "fixed fact."

If Jesus existed at all, Reason declares that he was

a Natural Man. Surely he could have been nothing *less*, and the conditions of this planet are not adapted to any higher form of being. Besides, he is represented as having all the various endowments and faculties, wants and appetites, common to the human species. Indeed, so positive is the demonstration of his manhood, I am not aware that it has ever been disputed; but the gist of all controversy about his Character has been whether he was not something more — that he was *God* as well as a man. This monstrous dogma is as vaguely stated in the scriptures as the authority on which it rests. Paul calls him "the *image* of the invisible God, the first-born of every *creature*," and agrees with John the evangelist in asserting that he is "the only-begotten of the Father;" but the Church declares, on the face of "the Apostles' Creed," that the only Son of God was "conceived by the Holy Ghost," and "born of the Virgin Mary." The authority for Paul's declaration I have never been able to find; his original say is generally thought to be good enough for that; but the later assumption is unequivocally supported by Joseph's dream of the miraculous conception, as related in Matthew and Luke.

Now, that Joseph, in the juncture of youthful love, connubial expectancy, and abrupt suspicion, which the

story involves, never had such a dream as Matthew tells us of, is more than I can say with certainty; but, allowing that the dream was genuine, I have a good mind to convince every Christian of to-day that its import was not so consequential as has been presumed; yet I will not undertake so much.

In the first place, we ought not to overlook certain discrepancies, or seemingly unwitting remarks, which imply no knowledge of the supernatural birth of Jesus, in the very books wherein the story is related. Luke, in giving the genealogy of Jesus, says in parenthesis, that he was supposed to be the son of Joseph. This supposition must have been general, else it could not have been esteemed worthy of notice in so special a manner; and that it included some of his own relations, and people in the neighborhood of his residence in youth, appears from the following testimony of Matthew:

"And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogues, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, 'Whence hath this man this wisdom? Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence, then, hath this man all these things?' And they were offended at him. But Jesus said unto them, 'A prophet is not

without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house.'"

Why did the people marvel at his wisdom, if they believed that he was a supernatural Son of God, begotten by the Holy Ghost, according to the isolated legend of the Virgin Mary? Why did not his own brothers contradict the saying that he was the carpenter's son? Nay, why did not Jesus himself assert his celestial pedigree, by acknowledging that the Holy Ghost was his father, when the sanction of such a truth was most opportunely demanded? Verily, because none of them had ever heard a lisp about the fable. That it was not current in the days of Jesus, is not only implied by the silence of Mark and John, but almost certified by the statement of the latter, that "the Jews murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from Heaven. And they said, *Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?* How is it then that he saith, I came down from Heaven?" Even John the Baptist had not heard the story when he baptized Jesus, of whom he thrice declares, "*I knew him not;*" neither had Philip, when he went to tell Nathanael, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, *Jesus of Nazareth the son of Joseph.*" In fact, Jesus is represented by the four evangelists as calling himself

the Son of Man, as Christians think, nearly a hundred times. In what sense can he have been called the son of *Man*, unless *some* man was his father?

But Jesus might have been misinformed; let us return to his genealogy as given by Matthew and Luke. If Joseph was only *supposed* to be his father, and if the writer knew that to be a mistake, why did he insert the name as denoting the lineage of Jesus? If Joseph was not his natural father, then he did not descend from David, unless by his mother's side; and to represent the genealogy otherwise was farcical and false.

I shall only mention the fact that Joseph and Mary are twice spoken of by Luke as the "parents" of Jesus, which, of course, were slips of the pen; but I cannot think Mary herself was liable to a like slip of the tongue. When his parents had missed the boy in a journey, and returned to Jerusalem hunting for him three days till they found him in the temple discoursing with the doctors, "and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, *thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing*," who will imagine that there was any mistake in her language?

In the second place, I invite all honest believers to consider the following facts, and judge for themselves how far they tend to invalidate the story of the miraculous conception:

1. It is related only in Matthew and Luke, is not referred to afterward in either narrative, and is not once alluded to by any other writer in the New Testament.

2. There is no evidence whatever that Jesus ever mentioned the thing to anybody, or knew that such a tale was told.

3. None of the apostles or minor disciples of Jesus, ever interchanged a word about it, in all their preaching and conversation, so far as reported to us. How could they have been thus silent about so interesting an event, if they had known of it?

4. It is related in the books of Matthew and Luke entirely on hearsay, and without any reference to authenticate the report. If these evangelists wrote the tale, still they do not pretend to know anything about its truth.

5. But there is no positive evidence that they *did* write it — nothing but the fact that it is prefixed to "the Gospel *according to* St. Matthew," and that "according to St. Luke." These books are known to be copies of manuscripts which either perished or were destroyed centuries ago — *copies*, I mean only with such expurgations and interpolations as their editors were ecclesiastically authorized to make. The general history of the Church renders it extremely probable that this story was a matter of tra-

dition, of uncertain date and origin, which gained credit in the age of pious frauds, and was foisted into its present place when the Bible was locked up in dead languages, and guarded by priestly hands, like the pot of manna among the Jews.

Finally, we ought to look at this subject in the light of Reason alone. The story is grossly absurd in itself, and every rational mind will cast it out as a worthless falsehood.

Where now is the supernatural character of Jesus? Like Noah's dove, it flies hither and yon, and finds no rest for the sole of its foot, till it return to the ark of faith. "Without controversy," says Paul, "great is the mystery of godliness — God manifest in the flesh;" and this celestial "treasure in earthen vessels" is like the bread of heaven in "the Wilderness of Sin," which would not keep except on the Sabbath. So very peculiar is this mystery, that we no sooner make up our minds not to believe without evidence, than the treasure spoils — the vision of glory fails — the form of fancy vanishes, and leaves no vestige to eyes of common sense.

No truth in Nature is better established than that Jesus was a man, and nothing more. As such he must have come into this World by the door of natural parentage and birth, been nourished at the maternal breast and reared like other infants. In his

boyhood he was playful and childlike, acquired strength by growth, and the use of his faculties by experience, and put off gradually the indiscretions of youth. In manhood he must still have retained the natural habitudes of men, such as eating, drinking and sleeping, and in his waking hours interchanging labor with recreation, enjoying society as well as study, and blending grave thoughts with the smiles and pleasantries of good humor. I make these remarks to offset the quaintness of his portrait in the Scriptures. It is very probable that Joseph was his legitimate father, and quite certain that the Holy Ghost was not; and it derogates nothing from the respectability of his name and Character, to assert that he was a Divine being in no other sense than applies to all the rest of mankind.

SECTION II.

Jesus a Preëminent Example of Humanity.

There is abundant evidence of the superiority and excellence of Jesus as a man. His Sermon on the Mount is an ever-during monument to the praise of his moral genius. His Beatitudes are cherished, by the pure in heart, as the sweetest of all memorials and the richest of all legacies; and the adoration of

all Christendom is only an offset to the stupid malice of the Jews, who spit upon and crucified the best model of Virtue that the World has ever seen.

Jesus was an intelligent man. His sayings and teachings exhibit acuteness of intellect as well as goodness of purpose. See how in his ethics he discriminates between the formal and the essential, and instead of laboring for an outside morality as Moses did, applies all his precepts to the heart. I am aware that many of his maxims are so latently prudential, that the wisdom of this World has always set them at naught; but that only proves the greater thoroughness of his moral system, as the work of an abler Soul. To *render good for evil*, to *judge not and condemn not*, to *love one's neighbor as oneself*, and to *do as we would be done by*, are maxims of Interest as well as Duty; but it requires a keen rational eye to see thus; and the want of this conception is the sin of the World. Man, with eighteen hundred years to consider these precepts, is blind to their policy yet. How beautifully great in the contrast is Jesus, who untaught discerned it!

There is no sign of littleness in the mind of that Nazarene. If he had any foibles, they were shrouded from perception by the prepossessive sway of his Worth. In all his teachings there is no leaning to a stale authority, and no standing on prejudice. As a

Reformer, he was just — never hurried by enthusiasm, never exceeding his purpose through excitement, — not overdoing his work. While rejecting the bloody rites of Moses as useless and wrongful, he still saw beauty and utility in the more civil enactments of the ancient legislator. "Think not I am come to *destroy* the law or the prophets," said he; "*I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*" What manly discretion is involved in this remark! He rejected nothing useful in the system of Moses, in which his countrymen had been nurtured: he conserved all that was good. The Jewish religion effected only abstinence from wrong: Jesus would fulfil or complete that by teaching positive Right. "Thou shalt not steal, nor covet anything that is thy neighbor's," was the law of Moses. "*Hate not thy brother*" — "Love thy *neighbor* and hate thy *enemy*," was Hebrew patriotism and the policy of untutored Man: "But I say unto you, *Love your enemies*," suggested the Galilean preceptor, in the gentle spirit of his own excellent maxim. And what intellectual beauty in the original conception, that the whole of Duty, in perfectional harmony with Interest, is comprised in this single word, *Love!*

There is no room for doubt that *Jesus was a good man.* He made it the business of his life to teach

Virtue; and if "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," his must have been a fountain of benevolence. According to the best accounts we have of him, he preached well by example, and showed in his own life the beauty of those maxims which he never tired of recommending to others. It does not appear that he followed any lucrative vocation for the purpose of "getting a living," as people generally do, and term their self-serving industry; but, in the spirit of his own teachings, "taking no thought for the morrow," and regarding "the life more than meat," he "went about doing good:" not, like some busybodies and idlers of later times, of whom the World is growing wary, going from house to house to exchange pious counsels for bread and butter; but healing the sick (which he was enabled to do by virtue of a magnetic power such as some in all ages have possessed), sympathizing with the poor and distressed, reforming the religious errors of men, propagating his own excellent system of morality, and announcing everywhere the good news of a happy hereafter. In this work it has not been hinted that he ever became in any wise burdensome to others; and the history of his doings compels the conclusion that in all his intercourse he sought the welfare and hearts of the people, without regard to their worldly substance, or the favor of temporal circumstances.

It is pitiful, but not strange, that he became poor, so that on one occasion he declared that "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." Yet this was uttered in no mood of dejection or complaint, but in reply to a certain scribe who, captivated by the winning spirit of Jesus, had just accosted him — "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." It is not related that privation and hunger and even gross ingratitude ever made him repent of his useful and self-denying choice. This giving all for the good of the needy was just what he recommended to the young man of "great possessions;" and the unwitting sacrifice of the rich in their selfish abundance, Jesus knew was vastly greater than his own. His biographers have not stated, and tradition does not report, that he ever repined for his own lot, or manifested discontent. His Soul was a fountain of Wisdom, and his words, to such as had ears to hear, were like the ripe fruits of Autumn. When others supposed he was hungry, he told them he had "bread to eat that they knew not of." His brow was never knit with anger, however he was insulted, and he blamed nobody, however wrongful. When he corrected the faults of others, it was with that "Charity which hides a multitude of sins." To the Jews who were plotting his destruction, he said, "Do not think

I will accuse you to the Father;" and to a woman taken in adultery, "Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more." Finally, in his last hour, when nailed to the cross and suffering the most cruel and hateful treatment, dying of torture by his enemies, he raised his eyes to Heaven and cried, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Verily, I could praise the Church and the heart of Christendom for their long adoration of one so worthy, if, instead of an imaginary Christ, they had but worshiped the *real* Jesus of Nazareth.

I must add that *the mind of Jesus was thoroughly rationalized.* He stood upon his own convictions, and not upon arbitrary premises. Heeding the voice of Intuition as the sole authority, he looked within for light and then abroad for what he might see. He reasoned always from axioms, and his method of teaching was strictly analytic. It has been said by some reviewers that he was no philosopher, but I think without due consideration. Such criticism makes no allowance for the fact that his reporters have presented only a distorted view of his doctrine. It is nearer truth to say that his moral system was too original for the prejudices of the age, and too rational for the comprehension of his immediate disciples. To think he had no philosophy because he failed to impart it to his inferiors in capacity, is not

logical. We might as well charge God with folly for being so long in teaching mankind; since some nations remain in a barbarous state to this day. The notion that Jesus was not a thorough rationalist follows the erroneous assumption that he is correctly reported in the New Testament. Let this assumption be reversed agreeably to the whole foregoing argument, and it will be seen, on recurring to the record of his verbal communications, that he really inculcated much that is rational, and this in a strikingly rational manner. Let this stand for one premise, and I will cite one of his own axioms for another, the sequel of which shall be, that he taught nothing *ir*rational: — "For every tree is known by its own fruit. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by its fruit. *A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit.*" This is as true of the rationality as the benevolence of Jesus. Being a good man, he could not teach what he knew to be false; and being a rational man, eschewing mystery and recognizing Reason as the law of his illuminated mind, he could neither accept nor teach what is absurd. See his reasoning with the Pharisees concerning *their Christ*, whom their tradition declared

to be the son of David: "If David call him *Lord*, how is he his son?" Matthew adds that "no man was able to answer him a word." But had Jesus hinted to his opponents that *he* was Christ, according to the notion of his later nominal worshipers, how apt would have been a retort of his own reasoning — How can the *Son* of God be *God?* In the light of common logic this appellation of Jesus is a postulate of his Human Nature, and an absolute negation of his supposed Divinity. In calling God his Father, he did not make himself "equal with God," as the Jews pretended, nor claim for himself any relationship to the Creator which he did not also predicate of all mankind. This is evident from the usual wording of his exhortations. For example: —

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as *your* Father which is in Heaven is perfect."

Here the correlative term *Father* is employed in its natural sense, according to which *every man is a Son of God.* There is also a moral sense in which Jesus claimed this Divine relation, and commended it to his disciples as the optional privilege of all; as in this extract from his didactic speech among the olives of Bethany: —

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy: but I say

unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; *that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven:* for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

If this quotation does not prove that Jesus was *a rationalist* and *a philosopher* in the widest sense, then I mistake the meaning of these terms. Were no more of his teachings now extant than what is here expressed, we might from this alone infer a complete system of theology and ethics: just as from a single fossil bone a good naturalist will deduce the species, size, and living habits, of the animal to which it belonged ages before. Fragments of his doctrine are to be found, however, scattered throughout the New Testament, where they gleam out of scriptural darkness as the stars out of Night: and before concluding this treatise, I hope to gather up enough of these to demonstrate that Jesus enjoyed the Religion of Nature, and preached only the Gospel of Reason.

SECTION III.

Jesus a Medium of Celestial Revelations and Angelic Influences.

The superior human development of Jesus rendered him naturally susceptible to inspiration by older Spirits who dwell in higher spheres. This fact is well attested by his biographers, though they do not state it exactly in these terms. Matthew says that when Jesus was baptized, "the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw *the Spirit of God* descending like a dove, and lighting upon him;" also that a voice from heaven was heard to say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Mark and Luke declare the same thing in substance, only Luke puts "the Holy Ghost" for "the Spirit of God," that "descended in a bodily shape," and Mark speaks vaguely of the unknown messenger, merely as "the Spirit." These three evangelists agree in relating further that, immediately after this incident, Jesus was conducted by the same heavenly visitant into the wilderness, "to be tempted of the Devil." There he remained forty days, eating nothing, till he became very hungry. In this case the Devil advised him to turn stones into bread, but Jesus would not. At length "angels came and

ministered unto him," and he survived both want and temptation. "Jesus returned in the power of *the Spirit* into Galilee," says Luke; "and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about."

In this pert way the evangelists dismiss the subject. If we would know anything intellectually about this strange experience of Jesus, it is in vain we go to *them*, for any other word than "mystery." They evince an undoubting confidence in the matter of fact — its mere history, and a marvelous faith in its unimagined relevance to the mission of their Lord; but as to the rationale or real purpose of a work in which the Holy Ghost, Satan and angels, seem to have been consentaneously engaged, they propose nothing. We are driven therefore to seek an explication outside of their account, or else reject it as irrational and false.

In this predicament it is both fortunate for us and favorable to the reputation of those sacred writers, that, by our superior attainments in natural science and philosophy, and more especially by recent psychical developments and revelations from the Spirit-World, we are enabled to elucidate as possible and probable what they relate as a marvelous reality. Every spiritual philosopher of the present day must regard the foregoing scriptural record as a witless

travesty on the initiatory experience of Jesus as a *Spirit-Medium*.

In going to the Scriptures for evidence on this point, it is proper to bear in mind that the biographers of Jesus have left us only the phases of phenomena which they did not understand. This inability to conceive must have been a constant incentive to suppress the fruits of their observation. Hence it is not reasonable to suppose that half a moiety of the spiritualistic facts of their day have been transmitted to us. Every remote and erring conceit of this class ought therefore to be taken as an indication of many realities. These will be suggested in great abundance, so soon as the truth is made to appear upon more positive data. These are few, indeed; but their paucity is no ground of presumption against their force, when we consider that all the evangelists were as ignorant of spiritual science as Nicodemus, who "came to Jesus by night," and went away *still in the dark*.

What do Matthew and Mark mean, when they say that "angels came and ministered unto Jesus" in the wilderness? It was not to bring him food that they came, because "in those days he did eat nothing," says Luke. Was it to drive away the Devil? The Holy Ghost ought to have been sufficient for that. Was it to sustain his physical

system against the natural effect of fasting? That would imply that he was less than the angels; and, indeed, why were they there, upon any consideration, unless this was really the case?

Again, what does Luke mean, when, in speaking of the spiritual agony of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, he says, "And there appeared an angel unto him, strengthening him"? On the common supposition that his sufferings there and on the cross were vicarious, and effective of the great Atonement, is it to be admitted that he was unable to perform or endure the work of Man's Savior alone? How did this angel strengthen him — in body, or in Soul? and how in either, unless Jesus was in some way susceptible to angelic influence?

A more remarkable instance of this is the alleged "transfiguration" of Jesus at the visitation of Moses and Elijah. Luke says, "he took Peter, and John, and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering. And, behold, there talked with him Moses and Elias; who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." He also states that a cloud overshadowed them, out of which there came the utterance, "This is my beloved Son; hear him." This testimony is

confirmed by that of Matthew and Mark; but none of those writers mentions the presence of the Holy Ghost, or Spirit of God, as at the baptism of Jesus, when a like paternal announcement was made: though Peter, alluding to the same event, says in one of his epistles, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from *God the Father* honor and glory, when there came such a voice from the excellent glory, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* And this voice *which came from Heaven*, we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount."

It is not at all likely that Peter was alone in this opinion, which only shows how little the disciples generally knew of the spiritualistic science as developed in the nineteenth century.

That Jesus was the *medium* of this celestial phenomenon, is quite evident from his being the nucleus of spiritual effect. "His face did shine as the sun," says Matthew, "and his raiment was white as the light." As to the disciples who were mere spectators of the scene, "they fell on their faces, and were sore afraid," being otherwise unaffected. But "Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid;" which indicates that he was not unused to

such visitations from the spheres above. Besides, the fact that Moses and Elijah came once to see and converse with and through Jesus, is presumptive evidence that they came often. Nor is it reasonable to suppose that no other spirits employed his mediumship, either for their own gratification or the good of mankind. On the contrary, the number and variety of his reputed miracles justify the conclusion that he was not only variedly susceptible, but was almost constantly subservient to one spiritual agency or another. For it is impossible that Reason should assent to the reality of his marvelous works, until they are conceived of as being explainable according to natural principles; and this can be done only in and through biological and psychological, or spiritual science. But of these departments of human wisdom I understand too little for the further edification of the reader, on this topic.

If it be admitted that Jesus was a medium for the colloquial intercourse of angels and men, I think it will help explain certain purported utterances of his, which otherwise seem to be spurious or inexplicable. His saying that "No man hath ascended into Heaven but he that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven," becomes a transparent expression, in the mouth of a spirit-born child of

Humanity. So a large portion of the sixth chapter of John, as well as other passages, bear a literal acceptation only with the understanding that the lips of Jesus were controled by some other spirit than his.

Not only is the mediumship of Jesus a key to certain mystical scriptures, as well as to a penetration of some of his seeming miracles, but it may account, partially at least, for his superior knowledge of the Heavenly World. The simple fact that the young Nazarene conversed with angels, answers at once the vexatious query of the Jews, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" shows how he was able to confound their doctors, at the age of twelve years; and tends, in all bearings of its conception, to confirm our faith in his pure and exalted mission as the great moral "Light of the World."

But in these suggestions I am conscious of approaching the limits of my own didactic profession. I do not pretend to have investigated thoroughly the spiritualistic science, and prefer for the present to maintain before the public the character of a *believer* in its developments of fact and substratum of principles, rather than *teacher* of its philosophy.

CHAPTER III.

THE RELIGION OF JESUS.

"The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in Truth."—JOHN IV. 23.

REASON is the Soul's light, and TRUTH is its Universe. All who are in this light see eye to eye, so far as they see at all. This is the great law of Mind, and the demarkation between men and brutes, the wise and the ignorant, the rational and the superstitious. It is the rule by which we measure manhood, and know that Galileo was superior to the mitred priests of his day, that Socrates was wiser than all the Athenians, and that the World's Jesus is a better image of God than the Church's Christ.

The light of Reason disperses all miracles, by revealing the *terra-firma* of Universal Principles. Here is the realm of positive intelligence. It is only in this that we look *through* Nature and see God. Every soul thus illuminated is conscious of being in the light, and that all elsewhere is darkness: nor is it possible to reject its Revelation and return again to

the state of former ignorance. I have already argued that Jesus was in the light, and therefore it is logical to say that his conceptions were real and his doctrine true.

There is but one constitution of absolute Truth, and therefore there can be no diversities of Infinite Intelligence. So from one Nature and one Reason proceeds but one Philosophy, as the groundwork of one human Religion. We must first see what this is, and then compare it with the Gospel of Jesus, to learn their identity.

In Webster's Dictionary we are told that religion is "any system of faith and worship." This can be the definition only of *false* religion, because it implies variety, whereas there can be but one true religion, as there is but one geometry, astronomy or science of any kind. *True* Religion is *theoretical*, *affectional* and *practical*, and may be defined as *the Philosophy of Universal Being*, *with the Love and Life thereof*. It has three grand compartments, each of which is resolvable into three constituents, as in the following partial analysis: —

I.

WISDOM, or *Religion of the Head:* including

1. *Science* — Conception of Truth;
2. *Conscience* — Conviction of Right;
3. *Taste* — Sense of Worth.

II.

PIETY, or *Religion of the Heart:* comprising

1. *Sincerity* — Love of Truth;
2. *Justice* — Choice of Right;
3. *Worship* — Wish of Worth.

III.

VIRTUE, or *Religion of the Life:* embracing

1. *Discipline* — Use of Truth;
2. *Beneficence* — Practice of Right;
3. *Gratitude* — Enjoyment of Worth.

Worship is a subject which seems to have been rarely understood. This word is a contraction of *Worthship*, as a noun signifying *a state of worth*, and as a verb, *its estimate*. In the absolute nounal sense it applies to God only, because he is the only perfect being; but God is the supreme object of worship, using the word in a verbal sense, not only because he is the highest embodiment of Worth, but especially because he is *the source* of all Goodness to his cre[illegible] It applies to Man in a verbal rather than [illegible] sense, because the worth of all finite beings is relative and progressive, and seems to be measured by the voluntary rectitude, no less than the instinctive force, of human endeavor. Yet it is to be observed that human worship is not a mere gazing reverence for Deity, so much as the actual recipience

of Divine Goodness, which qualifies the worshiper. Accordingly, worship is the normal condition and perpetual act of life. Though its institution is Divine, its spirit is secular, and its end is for Man rather than his Maker. Its consecutive degrees are conception, aspiration and communion, being born of Reason, developed in Conscience, and perfected in Affection. It inchoates in a sense of *the True*, advances by a choice of *the Just*, and matures in a fruition of *the Good*. Therefore Worship is the antecedent of Felicity and the consequent of Philosophy — first a thing of Light, then of Love, then of Life. Its temple is *Truth*, its rites are those of *Right*, and *Worth* is its object and end. — But what is the meaning of these emphatic words?

1. *What is Truth?* It is all that is, has been, and will be, both *in esse* and *in posse:* but there is a divinely conservative sense in which Truth embodies Right and Worth, and that is *the Worshipful.* This is the largest expression of thought and wish, embracing the fulness of Infinite Conception, as well as all possible incentives to rational endeavor. By analysis it unfolds into three great trinities: —

I.

OF PRINCIPLES.

Cause, Effect, Use.

II.

OF MODES.

Law, Order, Beauty.

III.

OF ENTITIES.

GOD, NATURE, HEAVEN.

Here are the Nine Parts of Speech in the Grammar of Wisdom. Though not quite so celebrated as the Nine Muses of classic story, they are fraught as well with attractive meaning yet to be said or sung.

A principle without mode is null, and a mode without entity is impossible: hence these three trinities are one. They are also to be read as axioms, for the middle term of each is a verb.

I. Cause effects use;

II. *Law orders Beauty;*

III. GOD IS CREATING HEAVEN.

Behold, in this Truth, the leading object of worship. *God is creating Heaven!* — for whom? For all who wish for everlasting Life. For *all?* — for *me?* Then in my Soul I worship *him!*

But when will the Creator have finished his work? If God is the Father of all Goodness, why are his children wretched? Because they miss the Right; for,

2. *Right is the way to Heaven.* God works by

means. His law is Truth, but ours is Nature; for this is God's *Word* of Truth. Nature is the method of Divine Beneficence, and the human standard of Right.

3. *And what is Worth?* It is what no soul can tell but in part, and that only to such as know, save that it is the ultimate of Wisdom, the fruit of Piety, and the coëval reward of persistent Virtue.

Thus Religion appears to be a science, not a mystery; a matter of intelligence, not sheer belief; not an avocation of Sunday, but the business of life. Is not this exactly what Jesus taught? Let us gather up the fragments of his doctrine, and see what Reason can discover of their integral consistency.

SECTION I.

God the Father of all Goodness.

That Jesus recognized but *One God*, is evident from the whole tenor of his teachings. His biographers represent him as often referring to the Supreme Being, and invariably by appellations in the singular number — never in the plural. They do not relate that he ever spoke of the Divine Trinity, according to the doctrine of the Church, or of *the Holy Ghost* as a person in any sense. He had much to say of *the*

Son, whom he identified sometimes with *Nature*, sometimes with *Man*, sometimes with the offspring of Man — *the Human Spirit*, and sometimes with *himself;* but never with God. He did not eschew, but sought only to liberalize, the monotheism of the Jews, teaching them to worship for Jehovah none but *the Father*.

The sentiment of God's individuality, and of his relation to man as Creator of the World, were deeply rooted in the Jewish mind; though the common notions of his character were puerile and irrational. Moses, their great lawgiver, had instructed the tribes of Jacob to believe that "the Lord, he is God, and there is none else beside him." The first words of the Decalogue were, "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is *One* Lord." This sacred precept had been iterated by all the prophets, as well as cherished by all the priests of Levi and the whole line of worshipful patriarchs. The Hebrews in their captivity had stood up in the great congregation of Nehemiah, supplicating the Divine favor, and saying, "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone: thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are therein, the seas and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all: and the host of heaven worshipeth thee." Isaiah, too, as the holiest mouth-piece of Jehovah, confirmed the national creed by his "*Thus saith the Lord*, he

that created the heavens and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: I am the Lord; that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another. I, even I, am the Lord; and besides me there is no Savior."

So far the Jews were right, and there remained but little room to teach this first principle of rational theology — the absolute *Oneness* of God. For this reason it were quite sufficient for our present purpose to observe that Jesus never controverted the tenet, that he apparently took it for granted in all his teachings, and only sought to improve this central idea by correcting certain misapprehensions of the Divine Character as Ruler of the World he has created. But there are at least two instances of his calling public attention to this fundamental truth, with an obvious intention to enforce it. Once on being accosted with the epithet "*Good Master*," he replied, "*None is good, save One, that is, God.*" At another time, a scribe having asserted with great earnestness that "*there is one God, and there is none other but he*," Jesus returned his own unqualified assent to the doctrine.

Yet it was not the mission of Jesus to inculcate the *Being* of God, so much as the propitiousness of his

attributes. Malachi, the last of the old Jewish prophets, had already proposed in a Socratic way, "*Have we not all one Father?* hath not *One God* created us?" And the implication of this language was so far understood among the Jews, that certain contemporaries of Jesus seemed to find an occasion to tell him that God *was* their father in this natural sense. Before the days of Jesus, however, none of the Jews conceived of God as the parent of *all* Good, and of Good *only*. The Jehovah of Hebrew mythology was a mere impersonation of finite justice, without an inkling of Infinite Love, — an object of superstitious fear, instead of spiritual worship. By all the Old Testament writers he is represented as a mighty potentate with a somewhat limited jurisdiction, austere in character, dispensing evil as well as good, and grossly partial in his administration of human affairs. "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people upon the face of the Earth," was the text of the first Jewish prophet, in his farewell address to the selfish and self-righteous descendants of Abraham. And this divine partiality was manifest in respect to persons as well as nations, dividing even the twin-born sons of Isaac. "And Jacob awaked out of sleep, saying, Surely the Lord was in this place, and I knew it not. How *dreadful* is this place!"

"The Lord is a man of war," shouted Moses, when he saw the foaming of divine wrath in the Red Sea, and his enemies engulfed therein. "And all the people saw the thunderings and the lightnings and the noise of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they removed and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." "Truly, God is good *to Israel*," acknowledged the psalmist of godly reputation, "even to such as are of a clean heart; but as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. But God is the judge: he putteth down one and setteth up another. For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red. It is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same; but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the Earth shall wring them out and drink them. Thou, even thou, art to be *feared;* and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art *angry?* The Lord reigneth, let the people *tremble. Let all the Earth* FEAR *the Lord.*"

But the Jews presumed too much on the favoritism of their Jehovah, to admit of any wholesome *fear* of his majesty; and yet they were too inherently selfish to *love* him, agreeably to "the first great commandment" by the mouth of Moses. Accordingly, they

often "rebelled against him and vexed his Holy Spirit," insomuch that he at last "turned to be their enemy, and fought against them," as their own prophets had premonished them. In this national predicament, few of the captive saints, who hung their harps on the willows and wept along the waysides of Babylon, could lift up their heads and say to the God of all, as good Isaiah did, "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not. Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting." These words are so "eminently suggestive," that I almost think their author himself propounded the very Gospel of Jesus. "*The Lord hath anointed me* to preach good tidings," cried Isaiah; and it is remarkable that the later Messiah announced his own mission in the identical terms of his senior.

I know not how many in past ages have *believed* that GOD IS LOVE; but Jesus was the first to make the *teaching* of this blessed truth the business of his life. He truly taught that *God is the One Giver of Good*, while all evil is accidental to finite existence; that *the Father of All* has never conceived any disaffection toward his human offspring, and therefore that no sort of atonement has ever been needful to conciliate his undeviating favor; that

nobody incurs perdition, but that Man is as naturally immortal as his Maker is immutably loving.

This statement is not so clearly drawn in the scriptures whence I deduce it; but the reason is obvious enough. Had Jesus written his own Gospel, probably no argument would have been necessary to discover its outline. The evangelists, to whom we are indebted for the premises of all that we really know about their Master, and whose writings involve incontestable proofs of a mingled honesty and misapprehension, have furnished us only with a partial record of his sayings and doings. From the sparse fragments of his theological system so accidentally transmitted to us, I hope to derive enough for the conviction of candid minds, that the above statement is in exact accordance with the preaching of Jesus, though not with every misunderstanding of his immediate hearers and remote commentators.

According to the most authentic memoirs of Jesus, he never made either the Being or Personality of God a matter of direct instruction with his disciples; but seems to have assumed both these truths just as he found them in the creed of the Jews. He labored well to improve the Hebrew notion of God; and, in styling the Creator "Our Father," he made the character of Jehovah better understood, and greatly humanized the spirit of worship. Among the adora-

ble attributes of *Our Father in Heaven*, his disciples should not have failed to recognize —

1. *The All-Powerful.* On one occasion, Jesus expressed his own opinion that "with God all things are possible:" meaning, of course, whatever is consistent with the universal principles of being; for the term "*panta*" and the predicate "*dunata*" can have no broader scope.

2. *The All-Knowing.* In counseling his disciples about the use of prayer, he cautioned them not to think of enlightening the mind of Omniscience, as to their real wants; "for your heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of," said he, "before ye ask him." To the ostentatious in worship he was accustomed to say, "God knoweth your hearts;" and to the meek, but of little faith, "Thy Father, *who seeth in secret*, shall reward thee openly."

3. *The All-Controling.* Matthew and Luke relate that a public discourse of the Galilean Reformer was at one time interrupted by his own ejaculation, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth!" He rarely spoke without a reference to "the Kingdom of God" which it was the burden of his mission to commend. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?" he asked in a responsive tone; "and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." Again he remarked with pro-

found significance, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." Submission to the will of God he enjoined both by precept and example. He taught others to pray, "Thy will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven;" and in reference to the form of his own death, which he anticipated, he thus resigned his own most earnest wish: — "O, my Father! if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, *thy will be done.*"

4. *The All-Loving.* I find not in the memoirs of Jesus many direct assertions of Divine Benevolence; but his teachings abound with utterances which *imply* an infinitude of this attribute. How full of inferential meaning is the precept, "Call no man your father upon the Earth; for *One* is your Father in Heaven!" It is not to be supposed that Jesus would teach men to despise earthly affinities, or break the ties of consanguinity; for he more than once commended the injunction of Moses, *to honor one's father and mother.* The implication is, that however estimable the love of an earthly parent, that of our heavenly Father is infinitely more so.

Doubtless the reader will recollect many passages in the life of Jesus which import a like inference with the above and the following. When he exhorted men to love their enemies, and to render good even in return for evil, he added that by so doing they would

become (in a moral sense of course) the children of their Father in Heaven, who "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Is it possible, by any form of language, to signify more positively the impartial Benevolence of God?

5. *The All-Giving.* "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" This is equivalent to saying that the Giver of life may surely be trusted to sustain it, and that the means for clothing the body can never be wanting to its Maker. Will God feed the fowls, and yet be careless of his human offspring? Will he clothe lilies, and make no provision for the sustenance of Man, for whose delight those vegetative beauties appear? Nay, has our Heavenly Father made this World of natural goodliness all for our temporal comfort, and, having gladdened our eyes with the mere glitter of the sky, is he about to forget us as quickly as we die? Will he let us drop into nonentity again, or banish us from his presence with a forlorn consciousness of his everlasting displeasure? No. Take no such thought for the morrow — be not anxious, saying, "What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall

we be clothed?" or, What will become of us when we lay our bodies down in the grave? "for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Ask, and ye shall receive. What man is there of you, who, if his son ask him for bread, will give him a stone? If ye then, being evil, know how to make good gifts to *your* children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give good things to them who ask him?"

It is not important to say now in what sense Jesus employed that mystical term, *the Son*, when he uttered these words: — "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." I make this quotation, not to show that Jesus was no Trinitarian, according to the Nicene Creed, for that were idle; but to exhibit his sentiment that God is the Father of all beings distinct from himself — the Giver of all life not his own.

As to the saying (probably of Jesus, for the record imputing it to John the Baptist is rather ambiguous) that "the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand," if this was spoken of the destiny of every human spirit, as I shall try to maintain before concluding this chapter, what a picture of the Infinite Giver is here! And why may *not* every child of

God and heir of Immortality bethink with Jesus? "All things that the Father hath are mine."

> The Universe is meant for every Soul:
> Each is for all, and each enjoys the whole

For, since Progression is the Grand Law of Creation, it is impossible that any creature should be deprived of its benefits. The example of Jesus is a prophecy of Judas. Whatever is predicable essentially of the best Son of God, is attainable also by the least. The meanest insect, if it knew enough, might say, in view of its future spheres of developing life, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father."

6. *The Supremely Worshipful.* That the mandate of Moses, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve," was religiously adopted by Jesus we know from other evidence than his reply to the spirit of evil in the story of his unaccountable temptation. It is not likely that he *exhorted* men who were ignorant of their Father in Heaven, to "love God with all the heart, mind and strength," or to "worship him in spirit and in Truth;" for how could they? But to such as knew the law, and whom he discerned to be in heart "not far from the Kingdom of God," he was accustomed to say, as in the instance recorded by Luke, "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." He

instructed his disciples to pray only to the Father, and often prayed to the Father himself; but is not said to have made prayer to any other being, or to have approved the worship of any other. He expressly declared that the only true worshipers are they who "worship *the Father* in Spirit and in Truth."

But none can worship God thus intrinsically so long as there remains a doubt of his being the Father and Giver of Good only. We must *know* the Divine Character to be *all* lovely, ere we can adore. It will not suffice that he has blest us hitherto; we must be assured that his friendship will never fail. His kindness must be unalloyed, and his favor without any mixture of evil. Who does not detest a man that proffers some benefit with his hands, while he carries an evil purpose in his heart? We never love one whom we distrust; so they who think it possible to offend God, have not begun to worship him. Will an honest man accept the spoils of a robber? As freely as a true Conscience would rest in any partial display of Divine munificence. It is not enough that God cares for *me:* I demand that he shall be just and merciful to *all.* It is only when I discover wherein his Character transcends my ideal that I begin to worship him. Did Jesus teach men to be more loving than God? Was his own last prayer for the poor

wretches that pierced and insulted his dying body — was that exquisite act of human love offensive to the Father? If not, then it is possible to *know* our Creator and yet *worship* him, as the Dispenser of *all* Good, and Good *only*.

Now this Worship in Truth implies a *Religion of the Head;* this Worship in Spirit is conjunctive with a *Religion of the Heart;* and out of the union of these springs *Religion of the Life:* for WISDOM and PIETY are the father and mother of VIRTUE. Thus we have already reached the logical evidence, that *the Religion of Jesus was grounded in Nature and Reason.*

SECTION II.

Nature the Method of Divine Beneficence.

By the term *Nature* the reader will understand the whole unfinished work of God — *the World of Sense, with all its inconceivable ultimates of spiritual development.* Since the Universe of Matter and Mind is the Creation of One God, who is the Giver of all Good and Good only, this his work can have no other than a beneficent end. Having maintained that Jesus inculcated all that is essential to the premises of this argument, it is unreasonable to suppose that so rational a teacher can have lost sight of the conclusion.

The doctors of Christianity, as well as of every other false religion, have taught men to believe that God has two methods of dealing with his creatures; of which one is according to Nature and Reason, and the other is contrary to both. They tell us that he made the World in six days; that having in a very inadequate space of time produced the Earth, filled its broad chasms with water, and shrouded the whole in an atmosphere of light and heat, he at once replenished the ocean with "great whales and every creature that moveth" therein, and caused the land to bring forth forests and fruited orchards, all in a single day; that, in the short interval between the rising and setting of the Sun, he made every species of land animals, beside the first man and the first woman, the latter being a transformation of one of the man's ribs; nay, that the Sun itself, together with the Moon and all the stars, was brought into being at the instance of his almighty fiat "who spake and it was done, who commanded and it stood fast."

To such creed-men it has been well replied, that a very different account of Creation is deducible from certain fossil data, of an older and more authentic origin than any parchments of Paul or Moses, which, for the information of the curious in these later times, the Prime Architect himself deposited in the strata of our globe, when he laid its foundations of ethereal

Matter in Motion. But with little effect are these miracle-lovers referred to the archives of Nature, for the most reliable history of the past, as well as the most promising prophecy of the future. Putting authority for Revelation, they will have no Gospel but mystery, and no teacher but credulity. They love to believe that he who made the ground "very good" for the use of all mankind, afterward cursed it forever for the sin of one Adam; that for a like reason the natural "heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked — is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;" and that our Maker's abiding anger thereat is manifest in the death of all flesh. They contend moreover that Nature contains no remedy for human error, and that Reason discloses no way of escape from the consequences of Man's fall, through the Serpent's seduction of Mother Eve.

But our inquiry turns on what *Jesus* had to do with such monstrous tenets. I do not find that *he* thought and spoke thus disparagingly of Nature. In all that his biographers have transmitted to us there is no word or precept of his which can be construed to an acceptation or favor of the above tale of Man's childhood. He never taught even by implication, so far as I can learn, that Nature is in any wise an instrument of evil, or that any other

method of dispensing Good is practical with God. On the contrary, he honored the *Work* and *Ways* of the Father coördinately with his *Being* and *Character*, assuming in all his teachings that *Nature is the sole method of Divine Beneficence.*

To comprehend the Gospel of Jesus we must penetrate the terms of its announcement. "The Kingdom of God," which he otherwise called "the Kingdom of Heaven," was the great burden of his preaching — the theme ever on his tongue. These terms are employed indifferently in his memoirs to designate the same idea, though that is two-fold — sometimes *the Universal Domain and Government of God*, at others *the State of Individual Happiness and Social Harmony* which naturally follows a due knowledge of the Creator and a just observance of his laws. It was according to this latter interpretation that Jesus taught his disciples to pray the Father, "Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven." In the former sense of the term, *the Kingdom of God cannot be out of nor less than his own Creation of Matter and Mind.* In other words, it must be identical with *Nature.*

Both the foregoing explications are applicable to the exhortation, "Seek first the *Kingdom* of God and his *Righteousness*," which may be paraphrased thus: —

First of all seek *Wisdom.* Know the method

by which your Heavenly Father gives good things to his children; learn the laws by which want, disease, remorse and evil of every name are to be avoided, and plenty, health, peace and all human blessings are to be attained. Seek this Wisdom by experience — by the exercise of Reason in the study of Nature — the Creation and Government of God; and having thus learned the means by which Happiness is possible, *be virtuous* — submit in heart and conform in life to the benignant will of the Father, that you may reach and enjoy the fruits of his Rule in Nature. So shall you find that health of body, that peace and joy of Soul, and that harmony of society and circumstance, which constitute the true temporal Heaven of human desire.

"The Kingdom of God is *within* you," said Jesus: and when he declared of little children, "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven;" of one who almost kept the first commandment, "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God;" to a certain seeker of Right, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven;" in his Sermon on the Mount, "Not every one that saith unto *me*, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that *doeth* the will of my Father in Heaven;" to

his disciples, "*Lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven;*" and to all, "Whatsoever *ye would* that men should do to you, *do ye* even so to them:" in all these express teachings, he assumed the validity of human incentives, as well as that Nature is the medium to Man of all the bliss of Heaven.

The Kingdom of God is *Nature*, and the Kingdom of Heaven is *the state of Righteousness* therein; and probably Jesus thus appropriated these terms, though the evangelists disregarded the distinctness of their application. This construction is adapted to a rational import of the parables of Jesus. "The Kingdom of Heaven," or *the prospective Righteousness of Man*, "is like unto *leaven*, which a woman took and hid in *three measures of meal*, till *the whole was leavened;*" for the Soul of Man is developed through *three forms of Matter* — the Mineral, the Vegetable, and the Animal, wherein the Life-gift of God progresses latently till *the whole is spiritualized* to a consciousness and love of Right.

"The Kingdom of God," or *Nature* in any one of its planetary forms, "is like to a grain of mustard seed," comparatively small, as is the Earth, "which a man" — God, "took and sowed in his field" — the domain of infinite space. "But when it is sown it groweth up and becometh greater than

all herbs, and shooteth out great branches" — the Spheres of Spirit-Life; "so that the fowls of the air" — the human inhabitants of the World to come, "may lodge under the shadow of it." For Heaven is the blossoming of the physical Tree of Life.

Again, "the kingdom of Heaven," *the objective state of human Righteousness*, as attainable in Nature, "is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away." That is, the physical form of Man, as a net, scoops the sea of terrestrial experience, and gathers various influences for evil as well as good; but, when the man is matured, the disembodied Soul shakes off its vices, and retains only such elements of spiritual worth as belong to individual character.

Once more, "the Kingdom of Heaven," or Dispensation of God in Nature, "is likened unto a man who sowed good seed in his field" — the natural appetites, intellects and faculties of Man: "but while men slept" — before the human mind attained experience, even in the semi-human state, "his enemy" — ignorance, "came and sowed tares" — falsehoods and mischievous inclinations, "among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up and brought forth fruit" — virtuous

habitudes, "then appeared the tares" — vicious habitudes, "also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest, while ye gather up the tares, ye root up the wheat also with them. Let both grow together until the harvest" — the Soul's exit from the body; "and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers" — the Souls of men, "Gather ye together first the tares" — review your life in the body, scanning all its errors, "and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn." Literally, Repent of all your wrong-doings, and forsake every inclination to evil; but preserve for your everlasting benefit all your habitudes of Right, with every power and susceptibility to Happiness, which are born of your natural manhood.

The reflective reader will note my discrimination between the parables themselves and the explanations which are sometimes appended to them in the Scriptures. I cannot think it likely that Jesus ever offered to explain his own figures of speech. To borrow metaphors just to make the people stare, were as queer in him as in any other public speaker. Nor is

it more probable that he spoke in parables for the purpose of concealing his doctrine, as some of the evangelists opined without a becoming reason. I rather conclude that the Nazarene Reformer, like every other man of common sense, made use of language as a medium for communicating ideas; that he commonly spoke with a desire of being understood; and that his figurative style was chosen for elucidation, instead of marvel's sake. The expression of his parables is, indeed, notably simple and apt to illustrate the various topics of his discourse. The most ignorant and simple-minded, if candid, must have understood Jesus. None but the prepossessed with false notions, and prejudiced by conceit, could have heard him speak, and then ask him to explain; except wherein the subject of remark itself was perplexing. All expositions of his parables, therefore, which in the Scriptures are imputed to him, are, in my opinion, spurious. By a like course of reasoning, many alleged sayings of Jesus, and it may be an occasional parable, are to be adjudged to the same category. In reading the Scriptures containing his memoirs, it is ever to be borne in mind, that we seek communion with Jesus not through the medium of his own pen, but that of a fallible reporter—one of his near disciples to be sure, yet who, on many points of his doctrine, only *wished*

to understand, and who related many hearsays upon no better authority than that of being "most surely believed" by somebody.

Through such a medium, it is wonderful, indeed, that anything acceptable to Reason should find its way to us. That many of his reported teachings were such as no superstitious mind could cherish, is evidence enough that his whole doctrine was consistent with Nature and Reason. It is not very singular that the evangelists, who never quite understood their Master, unwittingly mingled their own notions of Hell and the Devil with his rational teachings of Divine Sovereignty and Goodness. The part of discrimination, however, is ours, and with it the irresistible conclusion, that he who worshiped God as *the Giver of all Good, and Good only*, could have made nothing else of *Nature* but *the Divine method of Beneficence.*

SECTION III.

Heaven the Fruit of Virtue.

"Where is Hell? and where is Heaven?
Questions children sometimes ask,
But, to answer, hoary teachers
Have pronounced a fruitless task;
When WITHIN us both are reigning:
Search beneath, or soar above,

Hell is but the blast of Discord —
Heaven the regal sway of Love.
Can we see our Heavenly Father?
Yes, if we are pure within;
Everywhere his blissful Presence
By the pure in heart is seen."

G. W. Light.

How is it, that all the worshipers of the mythical Christ are ready to say that God is everywhere, and yet that Heaven is a great way off? Jesus told his disciples, in the spirit of the poet here quoted, that the pure in heart *will* see God; that the merciful, the peace-making, the virtuous, *are* blessed; and of the humble, the childlike, the righteous in life, he declared that "theirs *is* the Kingdom of Heaven." "Take no thought for the morrow," he urged, but rather "*rejoice, and be exceeding glad*" *to-day*, even in circumstances of adversity, "for great is your reward in Heaven."

The Christian habitude of longing for a *distant* Heaven is a fruit of religious error. It originates in the belief that God is a partial dispenser of good, or that he dispenses good and evil promiscuously; that he imparts through Nature the means of physical life, intending only a mixture of suffering and enjoyment therein, yet deals otherwise with Man spiritually, for the remoter ends of reward and punishment; and this by another method than Nature — by

Miracle. Such believers generally imagine that God has created a place of inconceivable glory somewhere above their heads, whither if they were to be suddenly translated in body, they would become all at once transported in Soul, so as to be permanently happy. In this delusion, some of the most degraded wretches that now crawl in the filth of earthly sensuality are in the habit of praying such a god as I have just alluded to, for a bare entrance into that "city of refuge" when they die, not doubting that the feeling of security there to be enjoyed, together with the delightful scenery of the celestial Paradise, will suffice to make them blest forever. And, to the doctors of Christianity, ancient and modern, belongs all the gratitude which such erring wights can feign, for the hope that prayer will be answered to the satisfaction of a heart so foolish.

Perhaps Paul was the first preacher in Christendom who literally told his hearers that "*a man is justified by faith:* for by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God — *not of works*, lest any man should boast." Perhaps, too, the first public dissenter from this kind of preaching was a true disciple of Jesus, who spoke before the lips of Paul were closed. "What doth it profit," demanded James, in the humor of Nature, "though a man say he hath faith, and have not

works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, or destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit? Ye see then how that *by works a man is justified*, and not by *faith* only. If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*, ye do well." The fathers of the Church were not blind to this dilemma of apostolic authority; but, of its two horns, they preferred the mystical, as better suited to their own ends. Wherefore, every pulpit since the days of ecclesiastical conformity, with very few exceptions just at this day, has been dedicated to the virtue of "saving faith," instead of *Faith in Virtue.*

But what is the consistence of faith, or what is the make of this wonderful shadow? Its prime projector will tell you, it is belief in Jesus as the Christ, and in Christ as the Savior of the World; and here is his sense of the doctrine:

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law," says he, "being made a curse for us."

What do you mean, Paul?

"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all the things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."

Well, be it so — let us keep the law.

"But no man is justified by the works of the law, in the sight of God."

Why not?

"Because the law worketh wrath; for we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal — sold under sin. For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil that I would not, that I do."

Say you this of yourself, or of all mankind?

"There is none that doeth good, no not one."

Wherefore?

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

Of what service, then, is the law?

"It was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

What faith?

"Why, that of which I have just been speaking: that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth."

Pray tell me what you mean.

"Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for Righteousness."

How you talk, Paul; and how your argument has turned the heads of men who know not how to square the circle of your say! Hence the Church derives that the life of Jesus was as vicarious as his death;

and, faith being esteemed voluntary, that every sinner, when he makes up his mind to believe, grows all at once a saint white as the Lamb of God, and goes to Heaven crowned with the very fruits of self-wrought Righteousness. But where is the word of Jesus himself for such nonsense?

I admit that the evangelists have occasionally construed the language of their Master into an oblique favor of what they vaguely misunderstood of his doctrine; but, beyond this, there is not the least evidence that he accepted the Mosaic account of *human depravity* and *Divine disaffection*, or inculcated *the Father's reconciliation by the death of his Son*, so explicitly set forth in the later writings of Paul. On the contrary, it is quite obvious, from the rational drift of his alleged teachings, that he entertained no respect at all for the Jewish and Christian notion, that there *is* any wrath of God from which men need be saved. "How think ye?" was his language to his disciples, when the correlation of God and Man was the topic of conversation; "if a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and go into the mountains and seek that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your

Father which is in Heaven that one of these little ones should perish." "These little ones," according to Matthew, are *children;* and have not all been such? But Luke, in rehearsing the same parable, makes *one of them* mean "a sinner that repenteth," over whom there is *joy in Heaven*, "more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance." In the same vein is the parable of the Prodigal Son, which elucidates with impressive aptness the enduring love of the Father for his erring children, who often need repent, not to pacify *him*, but only to accept his blessing.

Herein alone Divine Beneficence may fail to make us blest: though the Infinite Giver withhold nothing for our welfare, yet, for want of discretion, we are not apt to improve his benefits; and so wretchedness is the portion of our own folly. "Nevertheless, *it is the will of the Father*," said Jesus, "*that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.*" Now let me demonstrate that this apothegm contains the whole Gospel of Life, and that it was spoken not of *one* but of *every* child of Humanity.

It is generally supposed that Jesus called himself *the Son of Man*, as well as *the Son of God;* and I shall not undertake to say that his four principal

biographers employed the former appellation in any other sense. But to such as credit the anonymous tale of his Divine generation, I hint the solecism of *a Son of Man without a human father.* And why call that authentic which was written with avowed presumption? The evangelists do not pretend to have understood the living voice of Jesus, even as to the point under consideration. "For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying," says Mark, "and were afraid to ask him." This saying is said to have been rehearsed by "two men in shining garments" to certain women of Galilee who went to mourn at the sepulchre of Jesus. "And they remembered his words, and returned from the sepulchre," says Luke, "and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. But their words seemed to them as *idle tales*, and *they believed them not.*" The reason for this unbelief is thus stated by John: — "For as yet *they knew not the scripture*, that he must rise again from the dead." What scripture is here referred to is not discernible, nor is it consequential enough to inquire: but the above texts ought to be good against the assumption that Jesus ever told

his disciples in common phrase that *he should come to life again on the third day after dying.*

Before coming to a positive exposition of the mystical term in question, I must introduce another saying of Jesus — "*The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified,*" which, as John relates, elicited the popular inquiry, "How sayest thou that the Son of Man must be lifted up? *Who is this Son of Man?*" To this no immediate answer is reported, though both Matthew and Luke have preserved a fragment of what may have been opportunely uttered: "All things are delivered to me of my Father: and *no man knoweth who the Son is*, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." Now, connecting this declaration of Jesus with another made in the temple, in reply to a vociferation of the Jews, that "when Christ cometh no man knoweth whence he is"—"*Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am;*" and putting this and the foregoing quotations together, who can say that *the Son of Man* was not a more occult personage than has been supposed?

In order to find the true import of this significant phrase, we must attend to its etymology, and consider what idea it was primarily and literally fitted to suggest. Beginning with the accepted Greek version, since the original Hebrew in which Jesus spoke is lost,

and presuming on the fidelity of scribes and translators, "*Ho huios tou anthropou*" seems to mean nothing more nor less than *The Descendant of the Man;* or, without the article *tou*, *The Descendant of Man.* But this word *descendant* is accommodated to the vulgar belief that mankind has *degenerated* from Adam; whereas Creation is a series of *progressive* developments, of which the later is always the superior, Man having *ascended* out of the animal order, the animal out of the vegetable, and the vegetable out of the mineral. So each succeeding generation of the human race excels the former, and children should be styled as they really are, the *ascendants* of their ancestors. It is a notable thought too, that every human being is a parent, and that *the ascendants* of our fleshly life soar above the skies of mortality. And here I adventure my opinion, that *the Son of Man* of whom Jesus spoke so admiringly, is *the disembodied Soul* — that child of Humanity which lives when its earthly father perishes.

The correctness of this definition is evinced by its harmony with the context of many scriptures wherein the phrase occurs. "Nobody knows who the Son is, but the Father," because the Soul of Man is progressive, and the glory of his celestial unfoldings in everlasting life eludes the scope of finite imagination. "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he

seeth the Father do:" this is verified in Man. "Whatsoever things the Father doeth, these doeth the Son likewise:" this is prophetically true of every human Soul, and just as comprehensible as our immortal destiny: "for the Father loveth the Son, and." in the sequence of everlasting life, "showeth him all things that himself doeth." And thus, "when ye have lifted up the Son of Man," said Jesus — have come to exalt the Soul in understanding and affection, "then shall ye know who *I* am: that I do nothing of myself, but speak these truths as the Father hath taught me." Humanity is mortal: "the servant abideth not in the house forever; but the Son" — the Immortal Spirit of Man, "abideth ever" in the Universe. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Therefore "labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you." But "whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words," declares this rational preacher, "of him" — his former self, "shall the Son of Man" — his future disembodied self, "be ashamed, when he cometh into the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." Some who listened to these aphorisms were assured that they should *see* the Son of Man in his glory, even before they died. "And after six days," as Matthew relates, "Jesus taketh

Peter, James and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the Sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him." A bright cloud also overshadowed them, out of which was heard the declaration, "*This is my beloved Son.*" See here the Spirit-forms of men long dead to this World, as well as the immortal part of one alive! Look, and learn from this that every living Soul is born in death *an angel Son of Man.*

I by no means pretend that the expression thus canvassed is put for no other thought in the Scriptures, but the one here elaborated. I take this to be its prime and principal meaning, inasmuch as it applies consistently in nearly every purported speech of Jesus wherein the phrase occurs. As to the evangelists, we have their own confession that they only marveled at the mystery of a term which fell without meaning to them from the lips of their living teacher; and hence it was all of their own fancy that they afterwards made it an exclusive appellation of their ideal Savior. It is important to notice further, that these Scripture-makers not only thus ignorantly insinuated their own *notions* in the name of Jesus, but often, when formally quoting his language, they carelessly substituted their

own. In rehearsing the sayings of their Master, they seem to have deemed it trivial to preserve his literal expression to a nicety. As an instance of this assumed license, on one and the same occasion Matthew makes Jesus say, "There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, *till they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom;*" but Mark has it, "*till they have seen the Kingdom of God come with power;*" and Luke, "*till they see the Kingdom of God.*" Having somehow strangely concluded that the Son of Man was Jesus, that Jesus was the Christ, and that Christ was God, they thought it no harm to put one of these terms for another. So, for the looseness of their style, they interchanged pronouns of the first and third person, and in the act of quoting frequently put *ego* for *the Son of Man* in the mouth of Jesus. The reader will find examples of this in the sixth chapter of John, and *passim*.

Doubtless the foregoing argument will be more acceptable, if I can satisfy the inquirer as to the competency of the disembodied, individual Soul, to fulfil the mystical office which Jesus, according to the Scriptures, seems to have imposed on the Son of Man. Many believe in a *last day* of this World, when all mankind are to be divinely judged, and rewarded or punished arbitrarily, according as their deeds have been good or evil; and Jesus is supposed to have inculcated

the same doctrine, especially in saying, that "of every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give account in *the day of judgment.*" Yet he declared that "*the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son.*" This Son cannot be Jesus, for he also said, "*I judge no man.*" Still he admonished his disciples and others that "the Son of Man shall come into the glory of his Father, with his angels; and *then he shall reward every man according to his works.*" What shall we conclude from these several propositions, except that *every disembodied Soul is the judge of one's own life in the body?*

And wherein is this deduction unreasonable? Do we not already judge of our own characters? And is there any reason to suppose this habitude is put off with the body? Is it not the very office of Reason and Conscience to give us an internal sense of approbation or disapprobation, as the strongest suasion to Right and dissuasion from wrong? Even Paul could discern how "happy is he that *condemneth not himself* in that thing which he alloweth;" and John also, "If *our heart condemn us not*, then have we confidence toward God." And what other manner of *a judgment to come* can be of any conceivable utility? The Divine Judgment of Man was complete in God's prior thought of Creation. It is of little avail

that finite beings judge and condemn one another; and Jesus denounced the custom. Nothing, indeed, but *self-judgment* — that which follows a sensibility to Right and wrong, as well as assurance of personal responsibility, will answer the end either of retribution or reformation. And this most wholesome doctrine, I dare say, Jesus labored very earnestly, however fruitlessly for the time, to make his followers understand.

The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is a notable demonstration, that, in the opinion of its author, men go into the Spirit-World with the identical characters which they have maintained in the body. In all the reported sayings of Jesus, notwithstanding the contingent medium of their transmission, I have found none to contradict this opinion. In consonance herewith, he warned all men against the foolish expectation of Happiness, either here or hereafter, on any other terms than being virtuous. The momentous truth here suggested is what makes the life of every expression in his Sermon on the Mount. In a barely literal sense, the following piece of advice is of too little worth to be deemed a shred of that discourse; but Jesus loved a metaphor, and here it was fitly chosen:

"Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him: lest at any time the adver-

sary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till *thou* hast paid the uttermost farthing."

To me this figure of speech is quite as significant as if Jesus had said, Obey the monitions of *Conscience*, now and always, during your life in the body: lest this Divine Mentor resign his sway over your mortal career, only to renew his appeal to your Immortal Soul in the sphere of your future being; when, your powers of recollection being quickened, and the memory of your earthly misdoings becoming as a haunted house, for its spectral witnesses to your guilt, *Remorse* shall lay hold of your sensitive spirit, and drag it down to the dark abodes of shame and fear and penitential anguish, there to lament the woes of your own creating, and to ponder the almost hopeless task of repairing the mischiefs you have wrought. Think not the Mercy of God, though infinite, or the forgiveness of men, however free and abundant, will avail you in that Hell of your own making. *Believe in no Savior from Duty;* no, nor from *misery*, till you find the means of doing *then* what Conscience bids you *now*.

The reader will recollect numerous other counsels of Jesus which are in perfect harmony with this paraphrase. "Strive to enter in at the strait

gate: for many will seek to enter in, and will not be able:" like the rich voluptuary in the parable, or the young man of large possessions, who would rather hoard than give; for "ye cannot serve God *and* Mammon." So many who would save their lives, shall lose them; while he that for Truth and Right's sake is willing to sacrifice his pleasure here, shall find more than its equivalent hereafter.

And now, is it not easy to see that Jesus spoke in no exclusive sense, when he said? "It is the will of the Father, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day." What a verity is this to the heart of every thinker, who, inspired with Reason, looks up through the starry vista of Sense, and descries the All-Giving God! I shall leave my readers to compute for themselves their respective endowments by our Heavenly Father, who, as Jesus was wise enough to know, is not "an Indian-giver," as Job imagined; but, ever bestowing, he never takes away. Life, and all our faculties of knowing, doing and enjoying, with all their improvements by experience in this common school of humanity, are ours forever. Of all that the Father gives us here, we shall lose nothing, but raise it up at the last day of our earthly endeavor.

Finally, from all the scriptural developments of

this chapter, I educe the following aphorisms, as an imperfect summary of the teachings of Jesus:

1. God wills the Happiness of all his creatures.

2. Nature contains the only possible means of Happiness.

3. To be righteous is to employ the means of Happiness.

4. Misery is the negation of Happiness: all but the righteous are necessarily wretched.

5. The only remedy for misery is repentance and choice of Right.

6. All who persevere in wrong will suffer an increase of wretchedness, here and hereafter, until they repent and become virtuous.

7. Right being the only way to Heaven, the sooner we choose it the less shall we know of Hell.

CONCLUSION.

I have two motives for this defense of the Rationalism of Jesus: justice to his memory, and the bias of his name. A well-tutored mind will look at truth with an open gaze; but men generally spy it through a medium, as we blink at the Sun behind a smoked glass. I have an impression that this simile is borrowed, but I don't know whence. I am more certain that many will stop and listen when anything is pro-

pounded in the mode of their prejudice, who are wilfully deaf to the undisguised voice of Reason. It is better to go on crutches than never to move; and if I can but win the ears of certain limpers in logic, I shall then be able to tell them what will cure their lameness.

Most readers of the New Testament are quite ignorant of the real life of Jesus: for while the many confound him with the mythical Christ, the remaining few seem unable to distinguish him from an imaginary impostor who made himself equal with God. I have wished to correct this ambiguous Mistake of Christendom.

Having thus given the defamed Nazarene his due, it becomes us to make the best of his excellent example, standing on our own convictions, as he did. Never dream that any truth has borrowed validity from his lips, nor that the positive source of intellectual and moral light is either in or beyond the tradition of his teachings. I confess that I never knew he was so capable a master, till I had found the rule by which to measure character elsewhere. If I had not first copied the whole Gospel of Reason from the Divine Book of Nature, I might never have guessed, from the fragments of the same system in his mutilated memoirs, with how much docility and success he resorted to the common fountain of Wisdom. The ultimate of all I have said of his lore and example, is their bearing against ecclesiastical authority, and the welcome of Reason as the absolute Light of the World.

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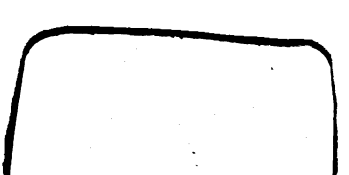
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